

JACK AND HIS ISLAND



LUCY M. THRUSTON



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JACK AND HIS ISLAND



Jack and His Island

*A Boy's Adventures along the
Chesapeake in the War
of 1812*

By ✓

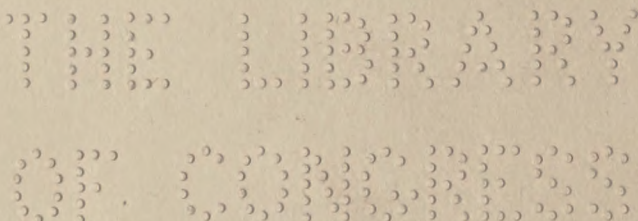
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TO

MY DEAR FRIEND

AUGUSTA L. WATKINS.

PROLOGUE.

IN the stress of war, characters form quickly. So it has been in the histories of all countries. Boys, youths, pressed by circumstances, do the deeds of manhood and play the part of men. So it was with me. The decisive years whose tale is herein set forth ran from the early age of thirteen to nigh my sixteenth birthday. They set the course of my life. For a quarter of a century that course has lain straightforward, sun-bright with joy, shadowed with sorrow, sometimes ; but ever straightforward. I have writ the tale of these years.

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JACK AND HIS ISLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THOUGH I was stiffened from long driving and cold with the unwonted chill of the June evening, I was never more wide awake and alert than when Rob came dashing up before the bright lights and swinging sign of the Golden Horse.

All the way he had found me a quiet lad (I was ever fonder of action than of speech); his ringing laugh had waked few echoes from the pale-faced boy by his side on the driver's seat, and his fund of stories had fallen on listless ears. Yet I think he was not hurt thereby. He knew that my father had died in Boston and that I went my way to lukewarm relatives in Georgia; and that by the counsel of that dear father, given when he knew his boy would be left alone among strangers, I was making my

way with all speed to Baltimore by the overland route, which was the speediest and safest, now that England strove to keep a blockade along our coast, and our own government placed so many hindrances that no packet dared show her nose outside her harbor.

In Baltimore I would meet Tom Marshall, a young man well known and loved of all, and hailing from his old neighborhood in Georgia, and together we would seek his old home; for though my father could not bear to dwell amidst its scenes, and sought refuge in travel from its bitter sweet memories of my mother, yet when illness stole upon him and he saw he must make provision for me, his desire was to send me home.

Could anything have moved me from my deep grief it would have been the huge wagon belonging to the "land marines" in which I must travel. But neither the sleek horses with their crests of tinkling bells, nor the great blue wagon stored to its white top with merchandise, nor the staring black letters printed on white cloth and fastened on either side to tell to all the wagon's title

in the new marines, "The Maryland Clipper," and its motto "No Impressment," roused more than a passing interest. In Boston lay all I loved. Before me were but vague memories and hopes that would take no rosy tinge.

So Rob had used his best endeavors and fared but badly. For surely it must have vexed him that I had no eye for the sleekness of his horses, nor his triumph when we passed some slower ship, nor no elation when we browbeat our way royally and were first over some ferriage when many another wagon had to lay by and bide its time, and no cheer at the bountiful meals the wayside inns provided us. Still he never lost heart, and now that we were nearing Baltimore there was naught that he left unsaid to rouse me to an interest in the bustling, growing place, which he boasted would soon excel the best of our coast cities. He told me of the fair glimpse of it nestling about its harbor we would have as we breasted the high hills over which the road wound; yet we came upon it at last at night, and in the clear glittering starlight following the storm

which had caused us to lay by far up the road.

For hundreds of yards ere we reached the inn the road was lined with wagons and champing horses, slowly mouthing the last oats in the long troughs fastened to the front of the huge wagons. Nor had I ever seen aught like the number of them on our twenty-five days' journey from Boston, for here, as Rob had already told me, we struck likewise the trade from the West, even unto Ohio.

Every window of the inn was alight, in the fresh breeze after the storm the trees along the pavement's edge were bending and swaying, and the gilded horse before the house, creaking upon his post, seemed rearing and prancing in the star-lit and lamp-pierced dusk of the summer night. Yet I gave but a thought to it, well as I remember the scene. It was the people who drew me — teamsters from the West and North, travellers biding a time at the inn, citizens of the town gathering in knots and groups, with eager tongues and earnest faces.

I swung myself silently down from my

high perch, for Rob must drive with clatter right up to the door, and I left him grumbling on his seat.

“In God’s name,” I heard him say, “what’s the cry now? Ahoy there!” he shouted in the sea fashion the teamsters affected. “Ahoy, there! Has the Golden Horse no welcome for Rob Ruxton?”

At that I saw a big man, stockless and coatless, making his bustling way out of the door, and I slipped away.

I wanted to see and understand it all, and I had no time now for Rob and his jests. What meant all these groups, these earnest faces and excited voices? I strolled eagerly near them, but could hear nothing that I could understand. The gate leading to the great yard beside the inn and the stables at the side of it was flung wide open and was choked with men, as I made my way through them. Here in the soft dusk I could see the dark forms of cattle, driven in that day and resting for the Monday’s sale. I heard voices far away near the stable, and, as I went hurrying across the yard, hot with the animals’ heat and foul with

their smell, I tripped, where I had noted no object, and went headlong into a soft fluttering mass. The air rang with goblin cries. I would have been sadly frightened had not my arms caught something as I fell, something I knew on the instant was nothing more and no worse than a big live turkey; but I remembered what Rob had told me of the great droves of them the men brought into the town from the West, and I stumbled to my feet, half ashamed to face Rob himself.

“Why, Jack,” he cried, astonished, “have you lost your way?” It was hard for him not to twit me, I know, still be it said to his credit, quick as he ever was to turn the joke on any one, he never laughed when his laughter would make one tingle for it.

“Here comes the light! It takes an old hand and one wiser than I to make his way here.”

He pulled me aside, as a hostler, lantern in one hand and with the other leading our horses, came quickly through the yard.

“I must see the beasts well tended to,” he declared, “else they will not be ready

for the journey back, and I must be going Tuesday. Two days' rest for the beasts and one for myself. Monday the wagon must be unloaded and refilled with her new cargo."

What else he said I heard not. I had paused at the stable door. Behind me in the dark I could hear the trappings of many horses, and far down the stable aisles could see the faint twinkle of the lantern, where the hostler guided our beasts to their stalls; before me were the restless moving and the deep breathing of the cattle, and now and then the startled turkeys rent the air with their cries; but above all this was that hum of voices, that sound of human movement, something was abroad in the street.

I found it not yet. Rob, with his hand on my shoulder, led me across the yard another way and to the door of the great kitchen, where fare for us had been spread, and he was overflowing with his good humor and the enjoyment of his meal, for there were oysters fresh from their shell on the board before us and biscuits and corn-pone

yet hot, to say naught of cold capon and venison.

“Aye, give me the good hot bread of Maryland,” he was saying at the close of the hearty meal, “none of your hard brown bread and week-old bakings for me; ’t is why the men are so lean and so dyspeptic, and the beer” — he drained his mug — “there’s none can touch it,” and he held it laughingly to the black who waited on us.

“Come, lad, drain thy mug.”

But I shook my head. I had not come to love the frothing drink, nor though I was consumed with curiosity had I questioned; a lad of 1812, even though he listened to men’s talk and was well grounded in public affairs, knew yet another thing — to hold his tongue. So my father taught me. Rob would have told me quickly enough had I questioned him, but Rob was used to thinking first of himself. His beasts well cared for, himself well fed, he was ready for the gossip of the town.

“Bring me the ‘Federal Republican,’ ” he commanded, and noted not that the negro’s face turned ashy as he spoke. “I have not

seen a paper since I left the ferriage of New York," he went on, carelessly drumming his finger points upon the board.

"What!" as the negro came back empty handed, "go and bring me the 'Federal Republican'!" and Rob's tanned face turned red with anger.

The negro was gone many minutes, while I, my supper done, fidgeted in my chair and looked restlessly about me.

"Nay, lad," said Rob kindly, noting my mood, "bide but a minute and I will go with you;" and he laughed and reached carelessly for the crumpled sheet the negro laid before him. "'Fore God," he swore, "it looks as if it had been well read. Let me see first the Marine news;" and he laughed again good-naturedly and pulled the candle nearer him.

"Come, lad, and see the news," he added craftily, and I knew what those words meant. Rob was a slow and painstaking reader, but he would own it to no such youth as I; nay, we only read together, so I pulled my heavy chair nearer his, and put my head nearer his curly poll in the

candle light. Nor did we heed that the kitchen was left to us alone. Out in the dining room were a great hum of voices and clinking of mugs, yet here, where Rob had elected to have his supper, there was quiet. The coals smouldered in the great fireplace, skillets from whence had come our flaky biscuits stood on the ashy hearth, the crane hung an idle arm across the chimney-mouth, and even the black who had tended us was outside.

Rob was all complacency. "We'll have a few words to add to these," he boasted, as he folded the sheet down to the items he sought. "We've left the Teaser behind and the Sailors' Misery was floundering in the swamps of the Susquehanna. Ha! ha! the Maryland Clipper, twenty-five days out from Boston! 'T will sound well; twice has it been printed thus, and once again will it so stand. 'T is a tale few captains have equalled."

"Horse-Marine Intelligence," I read, while Rob chuckled as he never failed to at the joke; "arrived this day, the three-horse ship Dreadnought, Captain David

Allen, eighteen days out from New York, spoke in the latitude of Weathersfield the Aspen, Friend Alley master, from New York bound homeward to Lynn," and so on, Rob making a running comment on each.

"Now, lad, we'll to the office and write a few lines more for them." He pushed back his chair, humming the chorus I had heard on many a long and weary day of that early summer:

"Our march is on the turnpike road,
Our home is at the inn."

But I, turning the soiled and crumpled paper carelessly, had caught sight of lines whose heading chained me to my seat. "Listen!" I cried, as I hurriedly began to read. The article was heralded with a quotation:

" 'Thou hast done a deed whereat valor will weep.'

"Without funds, without taxes, without a navy or adequate fortifications, with one hundred and fifty millions of our property in the hands of the declared enemy, without any of his in our power, and with a vast commerce afloat, our rulers have

promulgated a war against the clear and decided sentiments of the vast majority of the nation. As the consequences will soon be felt, there is no need of pointing them out to the few who have not the sagacity to apprehend them. Instead of employing our pen in this dreadful detail, we think it more apposite to delineate the course we are determined to pursue as long as the war lasts. We mean to represent in as strong colors as we are able that it is unnecessary, inexpedient, and entered into from a partial, personal, and, as we believe, motives bearing upon their front marks of undisguised foreign influence which cannot be mistaken. We mean to use constitutional argument and every legal means to render as odious and suspicious to the American people, as they deserve to be, the patrons of this highly impolitic and destructive war, in the fullest persuasion that we shall be supported and ultimately applauded by nine-tenths of our countrymen, and that our silence would be treason to them."

"Zounds!" cried Rob, as he pushed back his chair and jolted the heavy board till the dishes clattered, "treason, why —"

"It's treason, rank treason, he writes," I exclaimed, aghast at such language.

For in spite of my hurried reading, the

meaning was clear enough to us. That article printed that day, June 20, 1812, in a Baltimore paper, had maddened the populace. This was the meaning of the angry groups.

CHAPTER II.

WE hastened out from the quiet kitchen. Porch and street were thronged. The crowd in the streets grew to a mob. Down Market Street fierce cries and threats could be heard above the hum of angry voices ; but the mob, though fierce, did no violence that night. We made our way through it, Rob and I, as far down the main street as the great market and the marshy sides of the Falls ; and so I first saw the city. But when we turned aside, not far from the water's edge, and went a square or two, we found the street (Hanover, Rob called it) as peaceful as the villages we had thundered through. The women were sitting at their doors, the young girls were strolling arm in arm, and the children were playing in the street. We turned and came again to Market Street and across to the new sheds of the Lexington market, where there were sights enough to make us forget all else. Then in spite of my deep eagerness

Rob would have it, we must go back to the Golden Horse and go to bed.

The morrow, the Sabbath within the town, I shall never forget, though my waking thought was one of dismay. I had not remembered even to ask for Tom Marshall. Was he here, as my father thought he would be? Was his expedition from the West ended, and would he be ready to journey southward? If he were, when should we find a wagon thither, or might we adventure out of the bay, stealing down the long fringe of islands and inlets?

Up to this time I had had no fears; now I was beset with uncertainty. Rob must be gone in two days. I knew not a soul within the town. I writhed and turned and twisted in the hole my body had made in the feather bed, and my restlessness roused Rob from his deep slumber.

My troubled face met his waking eyes. "Faith, lad, you look as if your late hours last night had sickened you," he said, as he gave himself a turn in the soft feathers and pillowed his tousled head upon his sinewy arm.

I must have looked woe-begone, for after a sleepy, half-serious look at me, he began again: "Where are your red cheeks?" and he actually pinched me, as if I were a girl, though he stopped quickly enough at the thrust I gave him.

"Well! well! Truth, I thought last night the worst of your humors was over!"

I was silent, and Rob gave a long yawn or two, then sprang out of bed. The sun was already shining in the windows he pushed open. Looking upward through them I could see the sky, deep blue, and looking lower down, the roof tops and a slender spire. A chiming bell reminded me it was the Sabbath, and I set myself quickly to work to get into my clothes. One thing my father and I had ever observed in our wandering life—wherever we were to remember the Sabbath was the day of the Lord and to seek His house should it be near.

I was a silent lad by nature and heart-sick, I fear, spite the lessons of courage and self-control I had laid to heart, so it was not till Rob had gotten his jug of hot water

from without the door and had shaved his face as clean as a woman's — Rob was unlike most teamsters in this, and withstood many a jest on his foppery — that I spoke of the matter which moved me.

“Where,” I said, as I buttoned the fastenings of my bright blue coat across my chest, precisely as Rob was buttoning his, — “where can we find Tom Marshall?”

“At Gadsby's; that is where the swells stop. You did not look for him here? This is for poor devils like me, and the drivers and stock men and such like;” and he turned himself before the small swinging glass above the chest of drawers for a laughing look at his curly head, oiled and perfumed, his smooth cheek and high stock.

Rob went to his open bag and took out a flashing charm and black ribbon and thrust them and the watch he wore into his waistband, then he turned himself about in dandified enjoyment of his yellow trousers and blue coat, with shining buttons of brass.

“Faith,” he declared, “'tis well to be dressed once in two whole months.”

"But where did you get them, Rob?" I asked innocently.

"Right here!" and he pushed up a bureau drawer and snapped the lock, and put the key back upon his ring.

"But —"

"But," mimicked Rob, "I am a good customer of the Golden Horse, lad, and why should I not have a drawer here locked with my own key in the room I always sleep in?"

"You did n't keep any in Boston."

Rob's tanned face went red so suddenly and his laugh was so queer I was about to ask some other thing of him, when he came up quickly and laid his hand upon my shoulder, and together we stood looking for a moment out into the street. The bright freshness of the night was yet abroad, the maples were bending to the wind, and the sky where we saw its arch above the chimney tops was deep and clear and blue.

Far up Paca Street we could see the huge wagons, the tethered horses, and the teamsters, rough-looking fellows for the main, gossiping together or leading the beasts to the big trough of the pump at the corner.

Rob smiled as he looked at them. He thought of himself, I know, rested and dressed and dandified, and of the men there. I was beginning to see what foppish ways he had reserved for Baltimore.

A robin flitting about the maples lighted on a bough beneath us and began to sing his heartening counsel of "Cheer up! cheer up!"

"Well said! I believe you need it, Jack; 'tis good advice. Come, we'll get some breakfast and then go to Gadsby's."

But breakfast done, Rob began to fidget.

"What will you do all day?" he asked. "Perhaps you would like to go to church; there are some fine churches and pretty girls." Then he reddened a little and finally blurted out, "If you will but wait here a few moments, I will go down to Gadsby's and send Mr. Marshall up to you;" and then, as if pleased at his ready wit, he went quickly away.

I went out on the narrow porch fronting the street and waited and waited.

By and by many a person came strolling along the way, but none I could take for my father's young friend, nor was there a

glimpse of Rob till many wearisome moments were past. Then he came up the street alone. His face was full of light and laughter, though he looked chapfallen when he saw me.

“Poor fellow, I had no idea, the time seemed so short!” he began embarrassedly, but I cut him short with one word.

“Marshall?”

“Not there; nay, he is out of town for the day only. He stopped for a while at the tavern, and now makes his home on Charles Street with some French refugees newly come. He is gone for the day to some merchant’s house whose summer home is five miles without the city. He will return by sunset and seek you. They told me, his friends, he was on the lookout for you.”

“Well,” said I impatiently, “let’s go to church.” I picked up my pot hat and smoothed it quickly, put it on my head, and went down the steps, Rob lagging behind.

At the corner he caught up with me.

“Which way?” he asked.

“I don’t know — anywhere.”

We stood still a few moments, the hot sunlight blazing down upon us, and finally Rob said: "As for churches, I'm going to meeting."

"What's the difference?"

"Meeting? Well, that's the Quaker church, and a mighty fine new one they have near here, too."

I plucked up interest. "Let's go. I never saw a Quaker meeting."

Rob hesitated a trifle more. "Now see, if you could come back alone —"

I nodded impatiently.

"Well, watch the way you go, lad, and come on; there's only one corner anyway, and I guess you can remember that."

So off we went, I with a new interest now, and Rob with an interest too, judging by his stride, and soon we were swinging around Lombard Street, and there before us, with green trees at the pavement edge and green sward running up to the steps, was the new meeting house.

Rob hurried me in, and not till I was seated could I form much idea of the new scenes about me. Then I saw but little.

The pews were high. We were in one half of the building with all the men of the congregation. Opened windows showed the other half and the women folk.

The rustling and whispering died away. Silence settled upon us more profound than that of any forest depth. It deepened, till I felt I could not stand it. I must move, speak. I turned to seek aid of Rob. The softened look of his face, the tender smile lurking about his mouth, his downcast eyes, helped me more than speech; and, looking downward where he seemed to be gazing, I saw his watch charm, a crystal of many-sided glass, in his hand, the black ribbon folded at its back. As he held it, it caught the reflection of a face, a dainty miniature of a clear pink cheek and white forehead and wide curving eyebrows and lashes curled against the cheek, and half shrouded by the bonnet of gray. I drew myself high as I could in my seat and looked furtively through the open sashes. There were women pleased and content, there were children striving as I had been to be quiet and well mannered, and there in a

pew corner was the girl at whose reflection Rob was gazing.

I had food now for thought. I understood his caution as to my way. I resolved to be off the moment we moved, but I knew not when it came. There was a murmur about me. Rob rose slowly to his feet; the aisle had already filled and we must take our time, and the steps were crowded when we reached them.

I saw the girl's face at last, flushing as her blue eyes met Rob's, and I jumped from the step, remembered my corner, and turned tavernward.

I knew now why he had been so anxious as to his apparel, and why he played the spark with so high a hand in Baltimore. I knew, too, why I had been left alone; still, to his credit be it said, he left me not that afternoon.

Dinner done, we must needs go wandering over the town. Down Market Street, to the Falls and to the harbor and the wharves, where the houses near them, with their many windowed gables turned waterward, gazed on an idle scene; idle not only

because it was the Sabbath, but because the saucy ships lay with furled rigging in the harbor and dared not go coasting New England-ward nor sailing down the shining bay to West Indian port. Only the bay packets were busy. So Rob told me, as we loitered on the wharf and watched the June sunlight flashing on the water or shining on the white wings of the gulls as we leaned over the wharf's edge to watch the crabs go scuttling by.

Then we must up along the Falls and cross the wooden bridge to Fell's Point. There, at the wharves of the Point, was a tangle of masts, and there, too, Rob came upon a friend whose ship was to do me a service I little thought of on that bright June day.

The sun was sinking over the hills beyond the river ere we turned homeward.

Some one was awaiting us, the negro told us as we turned in at the Golden Horse ; and going quickly into the office, I came face to face with Tom Marshall. When I first saw him I held back as if for Rob, but Rob was gone. The tall, straight figure, the quiet,

haughty face thatched with fair hair, looked forbidding to me who had been so long used to Rob's merry eye and cheery speech. He greeted me kindly enough, and listened to my short tale of my father's death, though he knew it all from a letter my father had caused to be sent to Gadsby's.

"And he wished me to be your guardian," he said, when I had finished my halting tale, and he smiled so kindly that I lost my first dread of him. "I am honored by your father's trust, young as I am;" and he flushed at my wondering look. "But I look old enough to you; well, that is but right. I can double your years, so twenty-six must take care of —"

"Thirteen," said I respectfully, not noticing he had already spoken my age.

"Ah, you are tall enough, but slim and somewhat pale."

"I have been long housed."

"Ah!"

"Save for my journey here."

"Your father's illness —"

"He had been ill for months."

"He never wrote it."

“He never spoke of it. He kept up, gave me my lessons —”

“So he looked to your instructions himself,” said Marshall, as if glad to turn to lighter topics.

“Wherever we were.”

“Faith, I hope you’ve profited. I’m somewhat rusty myself.”

“When we reach Georgia —” I began.

“Aye, when we do, but affairs grow worse here, the wagons go less and less often, shipping is dangerous. Would you be willing to bide here until Captain Ruxton is gone?” he added hesitatingly. “It would be best, perhaps. I have urgent matters to attend to.”

CHAPTER III.

SO it was settled. Tom left me at the Golden Horse under Rob's care till he should be gone ; and the two men who had eyed each other askance at first, Tom no doubt thinking Rob a pretentious and dandified fellow, and Rob dubbing him a proud coxcomb, fell into friendlier feelings in their talk over my own poor affairs.

There was no sunshine streaming into my room when Rob woke me fussing about on the morrow, but a gray faint dawn in which I could barely see him, as he bustled about making a toilet far different from that of the Sabbath. Instead of his stock, a silk handkerchief was knotted about his firm throat, and the brown Kerseys he wore on his long trip replaced his gay coat and breeches.

I watched him lazily for a moment or two, and then sprang from my hot nest in the feathers.

“What are you going to do, youngster?” he asked cheerily, as I began hastily to dress.

“To do!” repeated I with astonishment.

“Aye!” and then he laughed, for he had seen without the telling that I had no idea save to accompany him.

“There’s an hour or two more for dreams,” he said carelessly.

“What are you going to do?” I asked abruptly.

“Zounds! there is work for every moment of the day!”

And so I found in truth. Early as the sun rose those long June days, his light was not yet abroad in the streets when I was at my old post by the driver’s side, and he, with the reins of his sleek six horses held firmly in his skilful hands, was turning them past the corner and into Market Street. The high winds of the day before had died into the stillness of the early summer’s morn. A mocking-bird on the maples behind us trilled into song, and rounding the corner from Gadsby’s came the early coach for Washington. The driver put a horn to

his lips and blew a blast that drowned the tinkling of our bells and all other sounds, as we went rattling past.

Other wagons were moving down the street, here and there the prentice boys were taking down the shutters from the windows, gay with haberdashery or other finery. It all looked cheery enough to me, for my heart was lightening from its intolerable load of sorrow, and a keen, tingling interest in all about me already beset me.

“Will any one be abroad?” I asked wonderingly, as we set out.

“There’s one that will,” said Rob shortly.

It seemed to me to be an hour when the merchants would either be rubbing sleepy eyes, or turning again, like the sluggard my father preached to me of, who was always solacing himself with his lazy refrain of “A little more slumber and a little more sleep.”

But Rob knew otherwise.

“There’s one that will be there!” he said, and he was right.

He swung his horses around Market Street and into the narrow way of Gay, and

drew up a square below by a big brick warehouse, and a young man came briskly to the door at the sound of hoof-beats and tinkling of bells.

The shutters here were down and the doors wide open for the cool winds from the harbor. As far as I could see inside, the dark worn floor was shining with its morning sprinkling and sweeping, and the whole place, grim and uninviting as a grocery warehouse must seem, yet looked like the young man at the door — wide awake and ready for the week's work.

I noted Rob's deferential greeting and heard the young man's quick, "I looked for thee. Thee was at meeting yesterday."

"We drove into town Saturday night — twenty-five days out from Boston!"

There was a flash of quick energy in the dark eyes of the slender youth.

"That's it!" he declared concisely; "there's nothing can beat the Overland, no storms, no wrecks, no losses. Where's thy manifest? Drive the wagon around in the yard, George" — to a prentice in the house. "See to the unloading of these goods.

Thy returning cargo is already made out. Bring thy manifest to the office."

Rob, with a nod to me to wait there, followed the quick steps to the rear of the store, and I stood still at the open door looking out. There was enough to amuse the dullest. The clerks were coming along briskly now. There came the merchants with courtly greeting to one another and friendly gossip at the corner, the prentice lads were running about on early errands, wagons were rattling down the street, and when I tired of all this I had but to look down the short street and see the shining water and the far-off sails of those packets bound on voyages along the bay.

By and by, Rob being still busy in the warehouse, I wandered down that way to the wharf, and watched the sunshine flashing from the waves and the circling gulls, and then I wandered back again. The sun was high now. The street grew hot and stuffy; prentices and clerks and merchants were alike busied in the dim dull buildings that lined the way. I was tired enough when Rob came out, Mr. Hopkins with him.

They were speaking of me, I suppose, as they crossed the worn floor of the dusky warehouse, for the young man came up to me and looked at me keenly.

"So thee is Tom Marshall's ward," he said quickly. "Tom Marshall," he repeated thoughtfully. "Rob tells me he purposes to journey South with thee. When?"

The question was put so quickly and so point-blank, I stood gaping, looking, doubtless, foolish enough. Finally I found tongue.

"I know not," I began.

"See that he goes quickly. Can thee frame a desperate homesickness?"

"I have no home," I faltered.

"Ah! I have; thee should see it," he went on most kindly. "There are many of us, and some rare times have we had, spite of what folks think of our Quaker training. Marshall has visited us. Should he still tarry here we might slip down some fair day."

But his mobile face changed quickly. "Persuade him to leave Baltimore quickly — if you can." He looked questioningly at Rob.

"There's nothing I could say to move him. I never saw him save for the few moments when he visited the lad yesternight. But why?" began Rob curiously.

"Has thee seen the 'Federal Republican'?" asked Mr. Hopkins.

Rob's gray eyes opened at a question so wide the mark.

"I read it Saturday night," I answered anxiously.

"Hum! hum!" was all Mr. Hopkins said for a moment, and then very quickly, "Was thee in the streets Saturday night? Did thee see the temper of the people? Marshall has put much money in the paper. He is hand and glove with the editor, Hanson;" and with that and a few kindly words to me, Mr. Hopkins was gone.

The early hours of the day had been so quiet that there had been naught to recall the angry buzz of the crowds on Saturday night, and truth to say, I had well-nigh forgotten them; nor was there anything to recall the feverish anxiety I had then felt as we walked back up the street to the tavern.

The hour of noon was not yet come, and the routine of business held men's minds chained. So it was during all the afternoon whilst I lingered about the inn and yard, Rob being busied elsewhere.

The sales of the cattle had gone briskly forward in the forenoon and the yard was well-nigh empty, though it would be filled again before dark. Yet twilight saw many more about the Golden Horse than they who bided there. Once more there were angry crowds and fierce talk in porch and bar, whilst waiters and host hurried about anxiously.

Rob asked him what he made of all this. He shook his head ominously, and I can well recall how the candle-light from the mantle flickered on his bald pate while he did so, and he answered he knew not. Saturday he thought it but a storm soon blown over; it was not. To-day men talked fiercer than ever, he feared. Why, what were they about? For as if by common impulse the porch and office were emptied of the men who had gathered there.

Rob jumped to his feet and I after him. We had been lingering over a late supper, but the landlord put out a detaining hand.

“Best not,” he counselled. “Stay quietly here ; their affairs are not yours. You know not — ” but Rob had seized his beaver (he was dressed again in his foppery, and may have had some happy idea of the evening’s pleasure). “Tut, man, come along yourself,” he cried, “there may be a fray.”

“But the youth,” protested the landlord, who showed no signs of deserting his own fireplace, piled high with green asparagus boughs.

“The lad,” began Rob doubtfully, but I was already at the door, calling him to come on, and Rob looked back laughing.

“You see,” he said, and ran after me. The crowd was now a square or two away down Market Street. We followed it quickly, and as we did, so did others. The crowd grew and grew, till an angry mob filled the street from side to side. Here and there it was held back for a space by some who tried to calm its passions and argue it

into calmness, but it went its clamorous way.

Rob and I were soon in the press. Rob had seized the landlord's thick stick as he ran out, and pushing and shouldering he made his way, I in his track. In spite of all their angry talk, their cries of "treason," "traitor," we had no idea what they were bound for till they turned a corner and halted and surged about a building with a big sign before it.

The ill-lit streets and the starlight gave us no aid for the reading of it, but Rob whispered to me, "'T is the place where they print the 'Federal Republican,'" and even as he whispered some hand on the outskirts of the crowd flung a stone against the darkened window.

It was as if the mob but waited that signal. Stone after stone was hurled through the air; the glass fell in showers. Some men made their way roughly through the crowd; one had a big iron bar in his hands. The mob roared, as they worked fiercely at the barred door. Many came to their aid. The door was shattered; and,

standing on our point of vantage on some steps across the way, I could see a lantern flickering through the shattered windows and a score of fierce faces, as another and another light showed them the deserted office and the presses where the hated paper had been printed.

And then, vengeance within their grasp, the mob became orderly. Presses, type, paper — all the office presented were thrown and piled into the street. Boys came howling up with sticks of wood and rubbish they had picked up from the street. Some one wrenched off the shutters and the shattered door. The pile grew, a man struck a spark to it from his tinder box, the blaze licked up the wood, played round the iron. Soon the bright light of its burning flashed up above the housetops and reddened the summer heavens.

Boys danced in rings and whooped, while grim-faced men fed the fire with everything the building held that would burn, and more type and forms were hurled into the flames.

I watched with the impersonal feelings

of a child. It was but an exciting play at which I looked; afterward I was to find out how far different it was, how vitally it touched me — that bright fire, in the midst of the street, ringed about with screaming boys and angry visaged men.

CHAPTER IV.

BEFORE the embers had died away and while the twisted and broken type and press yet glowed red, Rob marched me off down the street. The fracas was over, and there was another matter he must see to. At dawn he would leave Baltimore for well-nigh two months.

The crowd was left behind us. Soon I could hear the lapping of the water. We had turned towards the harbor, then we were walking along the street which bordered it, and could see the shine of the stars in its bosom, as we went quickly along betwixt it and the grim, deserted warehouse, till we came to a bend in the street, a wider way, and dwelling houses. I know how it shocked me to look at the peaceful houses and to the white porches, which ran before the houses with long flights of steps at the side, and to see the women sitting there and catch snatches of their light talk.

Not far down the street Rob ran lightly up the stairway of a porch. I followed. I saw him go up to the girl who sat there alone and lay his hand over hers, where it rested on the porch rail, and then, overcome with shyness, I sat down on the step. When Rob came back there were laughter and huskiness both in his voice.

“Well, well, lad,” he cried, “I have never served you so ill since your friend put you in my care in Boston. Come along home to bed; to-morrow I must away, and when I come again to Baltimore you may be safe in Georgia.

“Marshall will send for you early in the morning,” he went on, as we walked briskly back along the now quiet street; and it was not till Marshall had sent indeed, and I was face to face with my father’s young friend, that I began to have a glimmering of what that bonfire meant for me.

Had I feared him before, I feared him still more now. His face was set and stern that Tuesday morn as if it had never known a smile, and there were dark rings under his blue eyes — eyes that flashed like steel.

He had been up all the night before, I found.

“You saw the bonfire the citizens made us last night?” he asked shortly.

I was too awed to do more than nod an assent, nor would I have dared for worlds to give the slightest inkling of how my heart had joyed in the riotous crowd and the leaping flames.

“They’ll pay for it and dearly,” he swore. “A land of liberty this — liberty, when a man dare not even voice his views without being so beset.”

“I heard my father say —” I began, when the expression of his face, turned suddenly towards me, fairly froze the speech upon my lips.

“Heard your father say,” he repeated in a voice he strove to make kind, and I knew with quick instinct how hard an effort he made at self-control.

“That the British,” I stammered — “that this impressment — that if we allowed them to search our ships — we lost good sailors — and they might afterward dare much more — and worse.”

"I do not say they are right," began the young man hastily, "nor that we should not fight them. But there's truth in what Hanson says; we are totally unprepared."

"So were we in the Revolution," I put in boldly.

"Hum!" half snorted Marshall, as he looked at me more searchingly than ever before.

"We fought for liberty then," he said shortly.

"And for liberty now!"

"Tut, lad, the Boston air has affected you. Here in the South youth knows how to respect —"

"Old age." For the life of me I could not help it, and thereupon he burst out laughing.

"Still, a man should have liberty," he insisted; "liberty to say what he thinks on public questions, in a free country, in a republic, governed by the people, with a constitution allowing equal rights to all — he should be free to say what he thinks and not to suffer loss therefrom."

I was silent. The final assertive way in

which he spoke left no chance of reply, though I had many ready. For many a long hour had I sat and listened to the talk concerning this question till I was fairly saturated with the enthusiasm of it. I longed to tell Marshall things I had heard from my father's lips ; how the Revolution had started us on our independence ; how, he had asserted, the other countries looked not upon us yet with seriousness of our rights and privileges which were not fully recognized, and for which we were bound the more to fight — for a big man may pass lightly over an injustice, feeling his own strength, while a lesser man must allow no infringement on his dignity. And then, closer at heart, there were tales of border trouble, and tales of those indignities at sea which I felt no American could know and not grow hot with anger.

So I felt a bitter disappointment with the strong man there, and envied him his inches and his years. I knew well how I should use them ; and there being no more talk, I fell to looking about me.

We were in the bedroom of the house on

Charles Street, where we would now abide with the French family newly arrived ; and the negro who tended Marshall was unpacking my belongings and hanging them side by side in the roomy closet with Marshall's gay apparelling.

We would not yet be gone to Georgia, he said ; and when the negro left the room, I found the reason. Marshall had made money on his Western venture — what it was I knew not — and much of it had been invested in the “Republican.” His hard-earned dollars had gone up in that fire, and he was too much of a fighter to leave now. However he felt about the war with England, there was no questioning the way he felt about this riot in Baltimore ; he would make the city pay for it, he swore. With their police and officials and with the regiment formed by its citizens, private property should have been respected and individual liberty secured. I learned all this strong sentiment in the two or three days that followed, and then there was some mysterious coming and going, and Marshall suddenly went away.

I was left to the tender mercies of the household, and as I spoke no French and they as yet knew little English, I fared badly as far as company went, and I fared still worse for food.

Used to the heaped-up plenty of our people, I could not understand their careful estimate of diet, and when I found a dish free enough from garlic and spices to be to my liking, I feared to eat enough of it. This, too, when the gnawing appetite of boyhood's growth made one feel always as if the three meals of our custom should be six.

Fortunately I had some pocket money, and I spent many a shilling about the markets. Lexington I liked best of all. It was newly built and clean, and the wide stalls piled high with baskets of red strawberries or luscious raspberries or early melons, all set about and garnished with flowers, were irresistible. Nor was that all. Many a fat and yellow fowl dangling from an iron hook by its poor throat did I become a purchaser of. I knew a spot not far from home — or the place I then called home — where the marsh grasses grew tall and hid a firm nook,

an island in the rush-grown and tide-washed mud; and there a lad picked up in the street and I forgathered.

I knew how to make a fire of light sticks and thrust the fowl through with one and to hold it before the glowing embers, while the dripping fat ran down its sides, and the smell of it would madden a hungry boy till he fell on it and sucked even the bones.

In the marshes about us, too, many a bird might be snared; and when we were tired of all that, we might fish from the wharves, or, rolling our trousers above our knees, could go splashing through the water, forked stick in hand, in search of crabs, though those I never cared for beyond the catching. I could not eat them after watching them squirming in the old battered pot we tried to cook them in, or after picking them out of the fire in which they sprawled themselves in their agony and pushing them down again to their death. I left the eating of them to the other boy, whilst I sat down and bravely lectured on all those thoughts the fear of Tom had kept me from speaking; and we grew both of us so valiant and

longed so vehemently for the glorious chances of the war — for so I painted them — that we began to ponder how the two of us could run away to its glories.

But the war was well away. I brought a copy of the “Daily Advertiser” now and then, and together we pored over some sea victory or some border battle, and we bemoaned that here we were sea-locked and land-locked from it all.

Those days were few, running scarce a fortnight, yet I enjoyed them. It was the childish rebound from my agony.

I appeared punctually at the meals where I bided, and judging from the anxious face and quick French chatter, the good mother wondered sadly that the little American boy should eat so little; and I came promptly in to bed, and farther than this none questioned me. Not the least happy of my days do I count those I foraged in the streets and idled on the outskirts of the bustling new city, afterward to become so dear to me.

The days went by quickly till two whole weeks were passed. Then one Wednesday night I came home tired and happy and

mud-incrusted and water-splashed, and stole up to my room to clean myself — and there stood Marshall.

He was looking out at the river, and though he could glimpse the water running red in the sunset and the sight was fair enough to chain any man's eyes, yet I knew when he turned to greet me that he saw naught of it. Nor did he see me — that is, save as a person; he had no eye for mud-stained clothes.

“Well, Jack,” he said, as he shook me by the hand — thank heavens, they were clean; I had washed them in the river — “well, Jack, how have you fared?” And then at my mumbled answer he turned to the window, while I hastened to slip from my soiled garments.

When he turned again he eyed me with surprise. My face was ruddy with its quick rubbing. I could see it in the mirror, before which I brushed my thick brown hair.

“Well, well, Baltimore treats you kindly! Would it did others likewise.” He said little else to me, and what was said in that quick

French chatter to the household I knew not.

Marshall was away as soon as the meal was over, and I likewise was gone into the streets.

The boy I sought was not in any of his old haunts.

Strolling aimlessly back toward home, I glimpsed him ; he beckoned me with a quick, excited gesture, and then was gone. I followed carelessly.

It was too near the neighborhood of home to feel excitement. I saw standing about our doorway and up along the street a crowd of boys, whose attention was fixed on a house across the way.

I edged over to them and stood watching, though it was long before I knew at what they were looking. The houses across the way seemed quiet enough ; one of them was closely shuttered.

Before many minutes passed a carriage rattled up to it, and a wooden case was lifted out and borne quickly within. Presently the boys gazed over tall shoulders, and men filled up the street, and still the

crowd grew and grew, and still was it silent. Dusk thickened, yet it made no move.

Presently one of the close-shuttered windows was flung open and a man leaned out. His face was indistinct, but there was no mistaking the voice — it was Marshall. "Men," he cried to the crowd, "we are here in the pursuit of our business. The 'Republican' has been printed elsewhere, and we are in this house to see to its distribution. Any interference with us will meet with resistance."

He pulled the shutter to, but while it was still agape a boy near me threw a stone, which broke many of its slats; another banged against the door. Where they came from none ever knew. It was as if the very streets had been plucked up; they rattled against the house like hail. Some one fired from an upper window, a man fell in the mob, and then a roar of fierce rage went up.

The boy I had followed grabbed me as I started in the rush of the doomed house, but I shook him off. I knew not what prompted me, some mad impulse at the thought that

the only friend I had here or anywhere — and God knows he had been cold enough and careless, too — that friend was in danger. I fought my way through with the wildest of them. I heard the rending of my clothes as they were torn from my body. I knew there was a cut somewhere, because the blood was running into my eyes, and I had to wipe it out with the back of my hand.

But when they battered in the door, I was there; when they rushed into the hall, I was there; when they strove to force the stair, I was in the midst. I heard the crack of the pistols from the men who defended themselves. I saw a man on the stairway look about for the space of a second and fall back dead. I heard the groans of the wounded, as they were driven back by that galling fire from the landing; and as they were driven headlong back I dodged from the outskirts, where I hung, and hid myself in the recess behind the stairs.

I heard the howls of the men outside, as the dead and wounded were borne in the street, and then a quiet — if such it could

be called with that ominous low growl from many hundred throats forever breaking on the ear — settled down.

There was a cautious footstep on the stair, and a man came stealing softly down and made shift to close the door, wide opened to the street, and then he went up again and came, with lighted candle, down the stair and in the front room and through the hall. He held the candle high, peering before him to see if any of the mob should be hidden there, and as he came into the hall, through a door behind me, the light fell on my face.

Before I could speak he had thrust his pistol so close I could feel the cold muzzle on my cheek.

“Tom ! ” I gasped.

In all good fortune it was Marshall. His face was deadly white, and his fair thick hair hung heavy with sweat close to his head, but his eyes were shining and his mouth was stern and straight set.

He let the pistol fall and swore roundly as he saw me.

I thought it was because I had dared hide

myself there, and began to gasp out some excuse, but his stern "Have they murdered you?" showed me what he thought.

"No," said I, and laughed aloud. I think it was the first time I ever dared laugh before him, and he looked down at me where I still crouched, and smiled grimly.

"But you must be gone at once!" he commanded in a moment.

I looked back at him still smiling, for the noise from without was fiercer for the moment, and I heard the click of his teeth, as he set them together at the sound.

He sighed heavily as he turned to me. "You must come upstairs," and he led me by the arm, as he went back into the kitchen and looked to the doors and windows, and came once more into the hall. The door had indeed been shut, but it was strained and weak; their defence must be made from the stairway.

One of the men, pistol in hand, was already posted there, and questioned Marshall sternly as I followed him, but Marshall put him aside and went on into a small room, hot and stifling and full of men.

Marshall put down the candle on the narrow mantle-shelf, and the light flickered on the set and desperate faces of some thirty men. He told them briefly of the state of the house.

“Gentlemen,” said a man near him, as soon as he had finished, “it is now prudence to look to our safety. Hear me for a moment.” He raised his hand to quell the murmur that instantly broke out, and the barrel of the pistol he still held gleamed in the light. “For the present the mob is quieted and afraid. We can disperse from the rear of the house, one by one, and so reach safety.”

Oaths and exclamations drowned his voice. There was a cry, “They’ve had enough!” and another, “They’ll leave us, they’ll dare no more!” but in the pauses of the boastful speech came the low rumbling of the drum-beat.

“The militia at last!” said some one scornfully.

“That is no drummer’s beat,” cried one whose experienced ear told him a different tale. “It is a citizen,” he exclaimed with

quick positiveness ; “they are gathering — ” his sentence remained unfinished, but each man finished it in thought. I did, I know, though I dreamed of nothing so dreadful as that which did come as ending.

The drum-beat went on ; we could hear it up and down the street. The men talked low and earnestly among themselves. From my dark corner in the hall I could catch naught save snatches of their talk.

Presently Marshall came out. I could see him look about him, dazed by the darkness.

“Tom,” I whispered softly, and he turned my way and caught me by the hand.

“Lad ” — he had caught the word from Rob — “you should be safe at home. You heard what the general said ; you might yet escape.”

I was obstinately silent.

“We purpose to send some of our members out to their friends for assistance,” he went on eagerly. “You can accompany them.”

Still I made no answer.

“Should I go myself — ”

A quick pressure of my hand, which he still grasped, answered him.

"Ah, but I cannot!" he said, with a sharp drawing of his breath. "I will not! I came here in the peaceable discharge of my duties. We have harmed no one; we have come but to our honest work. Our papers are printed; we have come to distribute them."

"But why should you wish to?" I began weakly.

"Because it is our right!" Marshall's voice was intense if low, for all were near us, the men in the room, the sentinel at the top of the stairs. "Because no man has power to interfere with that right!"

"But they have," I put in.

Marshall dropped my hand impatiently, but I caught his arm.

"Oh, Tom," I cried, "what would I do if you —" I choked and could not finish.

"And I had not even thought," he muttered. "Poor lad." He put his hand on my shoulder and pushed me to the narrow stairs leading to the attic, and made me sit there while he sat by my side.

“I had not thought! I had not thought!” He left me for a moment or two and came back with a bit of paper in his hands.

“Here is a rude scrawl. If aught should befall me, take it to Mr. Hopkins. He is young and has a kindly heart, and despite his youth has much influence.”

And then we two were silent, sitting there on the narrow dark stair. The desperate men whose fortunes were our own held eager counsel a few feet away. The sentinel stood stern and alert, gazing down into the candle-lit hall; but Marshall lingered with me and comforted me, and gave me, now and then, broken words of counsel. Finally some one called him.

It was about three in the morning. Some faint coolness was making itself felt in the stifling close-shut house, some faint lighting was showing itself, and soon we must look for evil things. A mob, which had grown all the night, as the sounds proved it to have done, was not one to disperse with the morning light and the means to work its vengeance. Yet when the dreaded

moment came, I had little knowledge of it.

I was worn and racked with excitement, and sore and painful from the bruises I had got unknowingly when they rushed the house, with me in the midst of them. I was faint from watching, and touched to the heart with the gentle words I had never thought Marshall could frame. I was unfit to see it save as an evil, reeling dream — that renewed roaring and rushing of the mob, the showering stones and pattering bullets, the broken door again forced open, and then, commanding words and a parley.

A soldier in the hall called for truce, commanded the mob back, and came up the stairway. There was heated talk, much dissension; the soldier went down and returned, and I, who was with Tom now in the room, heard his courteous words and promises. He would take us under guard to jail.

“To jail?” cried a man I knew to be Mr. Hanson. “To jail for what? For protecting my house and property from those who assailed both for three hours, without being

fired upon, when we could have killed numbers of them. You cannot protect us in jail or after we are in jail."

The soldier appealed to the general. They went out together, came back; once more the soldier spoke. They should be taken safely to jail *for protection*, their house and furniture should be guarded, the militia would be about them on the way thither, and they should be kept from the mob. My heart bounded with joy—Marshall was safe.

CHAPTER V.

WE marched down the stairway, twenty of us. Broken and wrecked furniture was all I saw in the house, chairs dashed to pieces, doors shattered from their hinges, banisters wrenched from the rail, and I looked at it idly and impersonally.

To the very door of the house an escort had been drawn, and in the centre of the body of soldiers we were borne away. I dared not leave the men had I wanted. I knew it was more than my life was worth to venture beyond that protecting fringe of guns. I could see nothing but the set faces of the guarded handful of men and the blue coats about them and the blue sky above.

Once I glimpsed, as the soldiers closed about us in the street, a frightened face looking through a half-opened shutter. It was our French hostess, who may have recalled some such scenes in her own streets of Paris, — scenes from which she had fled

and doubtless dreamed herself secure, but here she looked down upon them once more in America, the land of liberty to which she and hers had fled for safety.

Our land of liberty jailed us for the day.

No sooner were we well within the grim building, safely shut in a strong inner room, than I threw myself upon the brick floor and was sound asleep. I slept for hours. When I wakened, the sun, which had been shining in the other side when I entered, shone full on my face, and a fly was tickling my nose. I brushed it angrily away, and rolled over to go to sleep. But it was Marshall who had wakened me, and he shook me again. I looked up in his blue eyes, which were half sorrowful, half amused.

“Such is the happy privilege of youth,” he said to some one by him, “to forget everything in slumber. He is as bright and fresh now —”

I started briskly to my feet, but fell back groaning. “What is it?” asked Marshall anxiously.

Again I essayed and stood upright, but

the soreness and pain of my body! I stretched myself one way and then another, and at last fully awake, became aware of my surroundings. The men with whom I had marched thither were close about us, but if there had been any hope in their faces then, there was nothing but desperate resolve now. I could make naught of it. There were others with them likewise, and there had been food and drink. Seizing the pitcher, I turned it to my mouth. The water was warm and slack, but I was fairly crazed with thirst, and the sight of a crust of bread gripped me with hunger. There was no time for satisfying it then. Marshall drew me again aside into the corner where I had slept, and there was Mr. Hopkins with him.

One or two men, brave and fearless of their own hurt, had ventured to visit the jailed men and take counsel with them, and Marshall had made desperate endeavors to reach Mr. Hopkins. He had come. Whatever Tom wished to say to him was already said; he now but commanded me to go with him.

“And you?” I burst out.

Tom’s blue eyes flashed, and then for an instant his eyelids drooped, but only for an instant; he looked back at me calm and steadfast.

“Mr. Hopkins will prove your good friend,” was all he said, yet my heart turned heavier within me than in all the terrors of the night before.

There was no time for farewells or forebodings. Mr. Hopkins bade me come with him and quickly, and giving me no time for questionings, went rapidly out through the crowd of men, along the bare corridor, down a flight of stairs, and out into the bright hot sunlight of the street.

He hurried me through the mob which crowded it and surged angrily back and forth, to his own house some six or eight squares away, and there he bade me eat and wash, and go again to sleep, and on no account to leave the house. He himself went out at once. I know he went to move heaven and earth to rescue the men in the city jail.

As for me, the first of these two I obeyed

strictly. I ate *first*, ravishly. I threw aside my tattered, blood-stained coat. I washed. The cut on my head was excruciatingly sore, and the housekeeper would have me rub it with some ointment made of fat and balsam. And then I watched my chance.

I was again in the street. The mob ruled it. Dwelling houses were close shuttered, stores were tightly fastened. Had there been any order or business in the city that day, there was no sign of it now. As I wedged and elbowed through the rushing crowd, I heard what made my blood run cold ; and there was not a face I knew, not a soul to aid me. I heard the plans of the mob ; they were known all over the city. The rioters but waited the night and the darkness to rush the jail and put every man there to the most dreadful death their fiendish minds could think of. Where was that soldier ? Where were his promises ? Where were the men who had guarded us to jail ? I wandered up and down, once as far as the wharf. There I saw one face I knew — the Captain who had befriended and amused me on my first Sabbath in Balti-

more. His vessel, a small sloop, lay at the wharf, and I found it was this in which Marshall had made his journey ; his baggage lay in the cabin.

Nothing surprised me now, not even the sight of these belongings of his here where I least expected them. The Captain knew where he was ; and together, elbowing and pushing and often hurt, we found our way back near the jail. There was no guard there, no hint of resistance. The lawless men seemed to know there was naught between them and their fiendish deed.

I would have glued myself to the jail steps and waited what they would do, but the Captain would not let me, and dragged me away with him.

Darkness fell over the city, the lamp-lighters were hustled from their ladders, and far above, the gleam of the stars shone faint and distant from that crowded street, as if the hope and justice of which they ever shine the signal were blotted out.

The Captain dragged me by main force from the jail.

“ The boy is sick, he has been hurt,” he

explained to some of the roughs who eyed us curiously, and in the angle of a bake-shop window, where he landed me, he berated me roundly.

Did I wish to be torn limb from limb? Had I not sense enough to know what would befall me? Come away to his vessel; he would make me safe in his cabin. And at last, seeing he could do nothing with me on that tack, and wondering, doubtless, what he could do with a stout boy resisting him tooth and nail in the mob, he tried another.

There might be some chance of help. Would I not be man enough to wait and see what could be done? And that braced me firmly. I set my shoulders in the angle between the window and the wall, and clinched my hands within my pockets, and so I waited.

Hour after hour went by, or so it seemed to me, — hours of raging pandemonium. Through many perils have I since been, like one who wrote in holy writ “in journeyings often, in perils of water, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst,” yet the most dreadful dream that ever agonizes a

midnight moment is some far-off thrilling memory, sending its message through the night, and I am once more a boy, pressed against the wall, with hell raging around me, and the only friend the world then held.

Toward the hour of midnight there was a tramp of soldierly feet heard above all the din. It was the militia forming around the corner; and the Captain, though he dared not speak his thoughts, looked back at me and nodded hopefully. I knew his meaning. The militia could have cleared the street in half an hour. I waited breathless, then came a wild cheering. That soldier who guarded us to jail had come down and dispersed — the *militia*.

The mob knew the doomed men were given up to them. Ere the cheering was done they charged upon the jail. I rushed forward. The Captain thrust me back.

“Keep where you are!” he commanded me hoarsely; and then, as he was a man of little stature and could not see above the heads of the crowd, he looked for some point of vantage.

“Here” — he pointed to the wood-work about the window — “climb up.”

He steadied my legs with his muscular arm against them. “Now tell me what you see.”

But I could only gasp. A man, raining quick blows right and left, rushed down the steps, which were all alight with the flare of torches the mob carried to light them in their fiendish work. Blow after blow fell upon him; one who had stolen behind him felled him with a great billet of wood; some one kicked him as he fell and sent him rolling down the steps; another kicked him high in the air, and he fell to the pavement.

“He is dead!” they shouted.

“Who is it?” breathed the Captain hoarsely.

“Hanson, I think,” I muttered; but I was trembling so I scarcely could hold myself erect.

“Steady! steady! Look for Marshall!”

“Here comes another,” cried the mob, with such foul words I will not write them.

Twenty men against all these raging

devils, that fought and kicked and beat them and threw them in a heap of dead in the street!

Last of all, I saw Marshall. He was on the steps; every vestige of clothing was torn from his body. His face was stained with blood, and yet he fought like a tiger.

I said no word to the Captain, but sprang almost over his head. He caught me. We forced ourselves forward to where in the street the victims lay, while the blood-thirsty rioters still howled for vengeance and cruelty. Some would leave them now they were dead, others swore they still lived. A man, bearing a lighted candle, leaned above the white and rigid face of one of them and pulled up the closed lids and dropped the seething grease upon the eyeball. Another with a fiendish laugh prodded the stiffened limbs with a great pin. Some were for throwing them all at once into the Falls which ran hard by, others for cutting their throats, and so be sure of them.

Now we had fought our way to the very centre, and there, his bare back gleaming

in the torchlight, lay Marshall. I knew his fair head, bared against the cobble-stones, and the Captain, at the risk of his life stood, over him.

“What would you do? Have you not murdered them? Have you not done your worst? Are you heathens?”

The mob turned on us. For a moment I thought we would share Tom's fate — he and I together, for we stood side by side — for one frantic moment, and then rose hue and cry; some of the victims had escaped. Scarce half the twenty lay there in that fell pile. With shrieks and cries of rage, the crowd turned, and without a moment's wait we seized Tom between us. Some saw us, but one dead man counted not when there were living ones to hurt, and we bore him the few feet to the shadow of the jail and there we laid him down, but only to get the weight of him better between us.

“If we can't get him away now,” swore the Captain, “we're done for as well as him, if they catch us.”

The Captain lifted him by the shoulders, and I, according to my strength, by his feet.

We slipped and slid down the clay gullies to the Falls, and once we fell, but we got him somehow to the brink of the stream and to a hovel built there for God knows what purpose ; it was a heavenly place of refuge then.

We could see nothing inside, there was no window and the door we shut after us ; and we laid Tom down as tenderly as we could, and felt about the rough boards of the floor to see if there were aught to harm him.

Then the Captain felt all over his body, and, putting his head down to his chest, listened long and intently. He lifted an arm ; it fell back lifeless against the hard floor.

“He is yet warm,” he muttered. “It may be a deep trance, we cannot tell.”

He opened the door and looked out, and the sound of the hoarse cries and the trampling of feet that was borne to us on the night winds made me shiver as if with an ague fit.

“Zounds !” swore the Captain, “’t is no time to turn coward now !” His voice was clear and vibrant with decision. “You

must stay here ; no one will find you. 'T is the only chance of getting him away. Even if he is dead, we cannot leave him. I will steal along the Falls to the wharf ; my yawl is riding astern my vessel. I will come back. Boats on the water at night are too frequent to be noticed."

He told his plan plainly, speaking, I think, partly to explain to me, partly to reassure himself ; and as soon as he had spoken, waiting no word from me, but with stern caution to make no sound, he slipped away.

I could hear the crunch of his steps on the beach below, and then, as it died away, a very agony of fear beset me. I laid my head down by Tom's, — there was no stiffness nor coolness of the body to frighten me, — and I shook from head to foot, though I made no sound. So afraid was I that I should cry aloud that I tore my sleeve from my arm and thrust the pieces into my mouth, and waited more rigid than the prone figure by my side, save when the shivers of horror and fear shook me from head to foot. It seemed

I had lain thus for hours when the blessed sound of oars in rowlocks was heard above the din of the rioters in the street above, and soon a cautious hand was at the door.

Together we got Marshall into the boat. We laid him in the bottom, and flung a big coat, the Captain thought to bring, over him, for we must pass under the bridge at Market Street, and no curious eye must discern the freight we bore; and we got safely away to the sloop and climbed up the dark side and laid Tom in the cabin.

The Captain's men were all ashore. He dared not wait and he dared not seek them. He threw off the ropes himself, and then the tide being at its ebb, he let the vessel drift off, while he and I made shift to set the sails.

The morning breezes blew us far down past the fort below the town, and past the tree-clad bluffs of Anne Arundel, and then, before they were out of sight, there fell a calm.

Long before this we had seen to Tom. It was but a long trance, the Captain had declared, and while he held the wheel he

had called down into the cabin to me and told me how to wash the great welts and bruises on his back, and the mud and filth from his poor face, and to cleanse the thick hair from the dirt and clotted blood; and while I was doing this, to moisten his lips again and again with brandy, till the first sign of his unconsciousness was gone. As the sun and heat shimmered from wave and deck, we opened doors and hatches, and then had thought of our own wants.

The Captain told me where food could be found, and we ate ravenously; and then I tumbled down upon the deck and in the shadow of the sail sank into slumber almost as deep as Tom's trance. When I awoke there was a gray darkness over water and sky. I thought it was the dawn, and turned me for another sleep; then I saw the white deck and the big flapping sail, and I knew where I was. I called the Captain, who had been nodding at the wheel. He stretched himself lazily, as I had done, but was wide awake the instant he had noted the thick atmosphere.

Overhead the clouds were closing us in,

so that we could scarcely see the land. The Captain sprang to his sail and called me to hold the wheel ; and while the ominous calm still hung over us, he reefed the sails and ran to the cabin to look at Marshall. We felt we could brave any danger after the joy of what he saw there, for Marshall was breathing softly and regularly, and was asleep. The Captain battened down the hatches, and we waited the storm.

I was a landsman. My childhood had seen nothing of the great deep and the ships, save an idle loitering about wharves in Boston and in Baltimore. I could do naught in the awful night that followed save obey the Captain, who dared not leave his wheel. I ran hither and thither. Now and then I looked at Tom, who slept the sleep of utter exhaustion — mayhap worse — in the cabin.

I crouched on the deck near the Captain, and dodged the waves as they broke now on this side, now on that, as the vessel heeled in her flying. The clouds seemed to rest upon the very waters, and the blackness shut us in as in a wall. There was no lightning to

show us where we drove, nothing but howling, screaming wind, and, by and by, cutting hail and lashing rain.

We were out in the bay we saw, when we left North Point behind us, and the wind which blew out of the north blew us straight down the Chesapeake. Of our bearings that was all the Captain knew.

I crept closer to him from where I crouched.

“Will we be drowned?” I asked tremblingly. It was some time before I heard his answer, and I knew from the tone of his voice how manfully he was fighting for our lives. He even strove to speak cheerfully.

“Ay, there’s many a storm I’ve seen worse, mayhap.” And then in the pause of the wind: “Down the Indies now—this is well-nigh like them—a hurricane—now if I had—but here we are—we must do what we can—go down and see Marshall!”

I stumbled down the stairs. Sight was impossible. I felt his regular breathing and crept up again, but the wind that had blown me straight down the steps blew me

sidewise as I came up, so suddenly had it shifted. The vessel gave one great lunge. So far over she went I thought her broken mast was pointed downwards and her keel was in the air, but she righted with decks awash and water pouring down cabin and hatchway. The cold douche roused Tom, and he called feebly. The Captain halloed loudly back.

“We have you safe away, but a great storm has struck us. You must get on deck. Jack will help you.”

I was already getting my arm about him and trying to lift him on his feet, and we stumbled and groped the few steps up the stairs and there we fell, both of us. We managed somehow to get close to the Captain and then to wait the end, for end we knew it would be.

No living thing, no vessel, however stout, could stand the awful wind and waves. Yet the end came quicker and far differently from anything we thought, or the Captain may have thought. For myself I scarce had sensibility left.

The vessel had been driven landward and

drove bows on a sand bank, then swung violently sidewise. The force of the striking threw us all, as she careened, into the water; and without a hope I went down, my arm still about Marshall.

We rose. Something dragged me by the hair and pulled me upright. It was the Captain, who gave a great cry of joy as he caught me. My feet touched the bottom and the waves rolled but over my shoulder.

"Where is Marshall?" shouted the Captain. We had come up together. Thank heaven the final blow had found us so close, else Marshall and I had gone down forever in sheer helplessness, but the Captain had struck out and struck bottom.

He got hold of Marshall. We waded through water ever shallower and shallower in the direction the Captain's instinct led him, and once more stood on firm land.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was not till dawn that we could form any idea of where we were. The storm went down with the breaking of the day, and the gray light dawning through the wreck of clouds showed that we were far in the curve of a wide, deep bay or harbor, on either side of which were fair fields and twice, at least, the shine of red chimney tops. But while the sight of houses promised future aid, for the present we were in a plight to try the sternest.

Marshall lay half unconscious on the sand, and showed scarce more of life than when we had borne him, hidden in our boat, to the vessel. For myself, I was so sore and stiff that my flesh felt like one big bruise, and my muscles as if they were hot and knotted cords. The Captain was the only one of us with strength or sense left in him.

At the earliest light he started eagerly off to see where we were, and what aid could

be got, while I crouched by Marshall, watching him.

He came back in a scant half-hour, long faced and chapfallen.

“Where do you think we are?” he demanded, when he came up to us; but I only stared at him vacantly. “On an island!” He swore a good round oath. “Shipwrecked on an island here in the Chesapeake, as if it were in the Pacific!”

I suppose my countenance must have showed some scare or flicker of hope dying out, for he made haste to add, pointing to the houses, showing clearer in the growing light: “They’ll come soon enough; that will draw them.” He looked sadly out to the vessel, heeled over on the bar.

“There is a race of water between us and the land, a good two hundred yards across and deep enough to float a ship.” But good sailor as he was, and used to facing and overcoming emergencies, he gave over, grumbling.

“There is a cabin on the bluff above us,” he said more cheerfully. “The chimney is gone and the door, too, but there is a dry

corner, and we had best try and get him there."

For the third time, then, we bore Marshall between us, slipping and sliding as we made shift to climb the bluff, and, on my part, groaning likewise.

All about the cabin door was wet as the sand outside, but far back near the big hearth was dry, though not overclean, and here we laid him.

He was so deadly cold the Captain thought that, spite the July sun which would soon be blazing outside, I had best find some driftwood ; and with the aid of the Captain's tinder-box we started a blaze on the hearth, and, chafing and rubbing Marshall, brought him back to some signs of life.

When the faint color began to show in his face, and his flesh to grow warm, and the dampness of the cabin began to yield to the cheering blaze, we took some thought of ourselves.

The Captain stood up from where he had been kneeling by Tom, chafing wrists and ankles and hands and feet, and looked about him grimly.

“Good God!” he said softly, and my glance followed his as he looked from the dirty rotted floor to the rough, cobwebbed rafters overhead, from the small window, gaping paneless, to the door storm-shaken from its hinges.

Then he went outside. When he came back he was stripped to his hairy chest, and spite of all our misfortunes, he was chuckling.

“Zounds!” he cried, “I have signalled in regular shipwreck fashion. I’ve tied my shirt to the top of the tallest pole I could find and stuck it up at the edge of the bluff. Some one will be here soon, else I am a duffer! We must have help soon.” He glanced anxiously at Marshall. “We have n’t saved him twice to — now — Just keep a lookout!” he called cheerily, “and, lad, dry yourself by the fire or take a turn outside. You are like a mop. You are dripping all over Marshall.”

He pulled me to my feet and gave me a push to the bright sunshine, now flooding the world outside; but the first thing I did when I had blinked my eyes to see in the

dazzling light of sun and gleaming sand was to search either shore, and my veins ran hot with joy when I could make out a group of men on the nearer side hurrying down to the beach. Nor did my joy suffer any abatement, for spite of the waves still running wild and high, they lost no time in pushing out a boat and making sail.

I ran with the news to the Captain, and together we waited them eagerly. As the boat came nearer I could make out two blacks at the oars and in the stern a man with a fine, frank face — a man who looked every inch a gentleman. And such he proved to us. Before the boat was grounded he was calling out anxious questions. By the time he gripped our hands he was offering us his hospitality, and saying that we should go back with him instantly. And then the Captain told him of Marshall, saying only that he was ill and unconscious.

“But the more need that we take him instantly where he can receive attention,” declared Mr. Rousby, for so he had already named himself to us; and he told us likewise that the house shining so fairly now

on the slope of meadowland running down to the water was Rousby Hall. I had heard mention of it in Baltimore; it was known for its hospitality and for one other thing I was to remember later, the pretty daughters of its household.

Mr. Rousby would see Marshall at once and try the effect of the strong flask he had offered to the Captain as soon as he landed. We soon had him, with its help, restored to consciousness; but when he turned, coughing and spluttering from the draught we had forced down his throat, and opened his eyes and saw us and the stranger, he turned again and flung his arm above his head. His poor, bare, bruised back was toward us.

Mr. Rousby swore roundly. "What is this?" he demanded.

"He was beaten about much in the cabin by the storm," said the Captain, fearful to tell what part he had played in the riot; and Mr. Rousby, though he looked far from believing or satisfied, must fain accept the flimsy reason.

I had gone around and knelt by Tom, and

he called me now softly. I started with joy at the sound of his whisper. "Send them away," he begged; and somehow by many tricks of expression and gesture I passed the hint to the Captain, who made some talk about his shipwrecked vessel and went outside.

Tom looked up at once, and the intelligence of his look and the gleam of the old-time spirit in his face fairly set me beside myself with joy.

"Who is it?" he asked, still whispering.

"Mr. Rousby," I went on eagerly. "We are on an island; his place is not far off across the river — Rousby Hall, you know." Tom's eyes were still questioning. "You remember last night, the storm, the shipwreck of our boat?" He nodded his head. "We are near there; he is going to take us all to his home —"

"Never!" cried Tom; and then he fell back, and I thought he had fainted and was about to cry for help, when he opened his eyes and looked at me. "I will never go! Tell them so!" he said shortly, and buried his head again in his bare arm.

So I told the Captain, and he went in the cabin and came out again, wonder and anger fighting on his blunt, open countenance.

“I fear,” he blundered to Mr. Rousby, “the young man is scarcely fit to be moved —”

“He is certainly not fit to stay here —”

“He — he is feverish —” The Captain clung to the word. “He is feverish,” he repeated with emphasis. “Sick people have strange fancies.”

“Which should not be humored !”

“Nay, I have heard the doctor say oft —”

“Doctor be damned !”

The Captain softly scratched his head, where the tousled hair clung salt and dank.

“I scarce know —”

Mr. Rousby turned and strode to the cabin, and the Captain looked at him and looked at me, and at the negroes waiting in the boat, and then away to the fair home across the water. Clearly the puzzle was too much for him, and he left it to our would-be host.

He came back soon, Mr. Rousby did, with

an expression as much like the Captain's as his fine features could wear.

"I would advise we take him up bodily."

The Captain shook his head.

"Then what can be done?" Mr. Rousby swore easily and gentlemanly. "Look at you," he went on, "and this boy." The Captain looked down at his hairy arms and chest, and turned red as a guilty schoolboy. I really believe he had forgotten his shirt flapping in the air. As for me, my dried and hardened clothes cut into my bruised flesh, and I was suddenly conscious of all the soreness and stiffness the excitement had made me forget.

"Look at you on this island, and that hut! I would not shelter my pigs there; and a sick man! And here am I—" he stopped impatiently. Language could really not fit all he felt.

"Could you not send us—" began the Captain.

"Send! And what good would that do? He needs care, sir, care."

But spite of Mr. Rousby's choler and impatience, so he decided. He would return

and bring us such necessities as we stood in immediate need of. We felt we dare not force Marshall.

Once more we watched the boat, rocking over the big waves. Tom was so obstinately silent, and had so sternly bade us let him be, that we had obeyed, and gone out on the sands and set us down to dry in the hot sunshine and to watch the boat. We saw the bustle on the opposite shore, the coming and going of burdened slaves, and then the white sails set again island-wards.

What stores were in that boat! First there was food — chicken and white bread and wine and ham and cold pone and fresh ripe peaches.

How I remembered my aching emptiness as I seized the food and made first for Tom; but he would not even turn his face, and swore at me as I begged him to eat, and told him in glowing words how delicious was the food.

And then I sat down on the hearth near him; I had no thought of cruelty, and ate all my hands held — a fat baked fowl and brown biscuits and soft sweet peaches;

and I rose up and went out and felt once more what I was—a boy with an insatiable appetite for food and for adventure. Both were at hand. I could have whistled.

CHAPTER VII.

I WENT down to the beach. Mr. Rousby, his good-nature restored now that there was something to do and he was commanding the doing of it, stood ordering the slaves about their work.

“Sam, lay that feather bed there, where the sand is dry, sir; and the tick — put it there by it! Get out those forked saplings!” I grinned at the absurdity of the beds brought over in a boat, and wondered what the forked sticks could be for.

“If you will go up with them,” Mr. Rousby turned to the Captain, “and see that they go easily, they are so heedless, confound them! Let them fix the bed without any noise or confusion, and once we make that sick man comfortable perhaps he’ll have a glimmering of sense.”

The negroes picked up the bed ticks, and I stood looking idly on, but Mr. Rousby had a command ready for me.

“Here, sir, put yourself to some use; carry those saplings up.” And then Mr. Rousby, having given every man something to do, followed empty handed and leisurely.

I scrambled up the bluff with my queer burden. The negroes took them from me, and in a trice they were put in place. The forked sticks were set up, poles were laid across them and thrust into the interstices of the logs forming the wall, other poles were laid across these, and on went tick of straw and tick of feathers; clean sheets were whipped over them, and there, with a pillow for his head, we laid Marshall.

“There is an excellent spring hard by —”

“I found it!” I interrupted.

“Then perhaps,” he finished, looking at the Captain, “you had best bathe the bruises of that young man. A little whiskey and water now; there are other things to be brought up.”

He left us to the tendance of Marshall, who kept his obstinate fit and would let us do little for him; and while we strove to do that little the negroes brought in the hamper of food and a willow woven basket. I

peeped under the lid, and saw candles and white home-made soap and towels and plates and mugs of pewter.

When all was placed in order the negroes went sailing homeward. The Captain and I were mayhap dismayed to see them push off and leave Mr. Rousby on the wide beach, shouting orders after them. He was so much the dignified gentleman, so much the commander, and I don't believe we wanted to be commanded.

Yet he did so wisely and for our good. That night we were ordered to sleep while he kept watch. He looked somewhat rueful as he remembered for the first time that all his care had been for the sick man, and we lacked all comforts for sleeping. Not that it mattered a whit to us. The ground outside the door was warm and sun-dried, and the Captain wished no better bed; but I elected to sleep within.

Not till I stretched out in the darkest corner did I know what excitement had run riot in my veins and kept me from the soreness, the stiffness, the weariness, that now came upon me. My head rang and rang

when I closed my eyes. A feeling I scarce knew how to describe save as a bath of hot prickly sand ran from head to foot, and should sleep be almost upon me I seemed to be rolling down vast precipices and struggling in gulping waves, till with jumping muscles and jerking nerves I was wide awake.

I took to watching Mr. Rousby where he sat. The candle from the rude chimney shelf threw a faint flicker about him. He had no more comfortable resting-place than a wave-washed and sun-dried log which had been rolled inside, and yet he sat as easily and leaned against the rough wall as lightly as if it had been the softest chair of his Hall.

Katydids were shrilling outside and the frogs were croaking loudly in the marsh, and through the open door I could see the luminous gleam of summer stars. It was a midsummer's night, soft and mild; who could have thought the terror and storm and shipwreck not twenty-four hours past? And looking at the gleaming stars, slowly my head grew clear of sick fancies, my limbs ceased their twitching. I was asleep.

Our new friend and benefactor looked pale and worn when I had aroused enough to know aught besides my own feelings, and there was much trouble in his face. Poor Tom had been raging with fever, and had been delirious in the night; and being so he must have told his tale to the watcher's ears.

We found now why Mr. Rousby had fallen in with our humor and not over-ridden us all, as he seemed likeliest to do, and carried Tom off at once. He knew not the sickness, and feared it for his household. But he knew and guessed aright now, and knowing, gave his counsel.

"'Twas just as well that he lay hidden here for the nonce; he should lack no kindness, no attention;" and his deeds amply fulfilled the promise of his word.

The wretched cabin was soon made clean and habitable, and we were so provided with food we had to call a protest, while everything that could be done was done for Tom.

A week went by thus, a week of nursing as careful as we knew, of long, slow watch-

ings by the bed where Marshall lay like a log or, what was worse, moaned restlessly and muttered broken words; a week of loiterings by the shore and watching the white sails of the canoe that came each day, with always the same slaves to guide it, so that our secret could be the better kept, and with everything we could need or wish.

Now two weeks were gone, and the fever died away, and Tom began to creep slowly back to life.

Meanwhile came news from without, both good and bad.

The tide of feeling had turned in Baltimore. Many of its citizens were hot with indignation that such disgraceful scenes had stained their city. "Niles' Register," voicing their horror, had printed scathing denunciations of the mayor, and the officer who should have guarded us with his regiment, but had instead ordered their dispersal — so far good.

Then came the bad. They were of British victories, of close blockade and embargo. It was scarce known what sailing could be

made out of the Chesapeake, and all this came to Tom's ears, when by and by he was able to creep out in the sunshine of early morn or in the cool twilight; and as strength came back to him and clear reason, he must have thought much of our condition.

But now that I have gotten thus far on my tale I must creep like a crab backwards. When the heavy winds and tides had died down after our shipwreck, there came a day when the whole deep curve of water back of which lay our island ran shimmering in the summer calm like a sheet of glass — no, no sheet of glass could ever look like that. There the wide harbor lay like burnished silver, with great stretches of purple and waving breadths of blue along its motionless expanse; the shimmer of summer heat rose above it and made the encircling land purplish and hazy; and far off, where harbor and bay met and the Chesapeake stretched across to the peninsula on the other side, there was naught visible save glittering water. It might have been the wide Atlantic.

On such a day as this when the tide had run far out, leaving great stretches of bare sand and mud, while Mr. Rousby kept watch by Tom's lethargic sleep, the Captain and I pulled out to the shipwrecked vessel. She had righted a little, so that the deck stood not quite so straight up and down, and we managed to clamber on board and the Captain to get into the cabin. The water there was breast high on him; it would have been head high on me, so I must needs wait outside and hold on to the cabin top and peer into the depths and shout encouragement to the Captain, who fished about for his belongings and for Tom's, and we hailed with clamorous joy each thing that could be found and carried to the boat and dried on the sands.

Many a trip we made backward and forward, and many an hour of idleness we varied by strolling out to turn and change the drying things and then to store them in our cabin loft. So it came about that the Captain had clothes enough and so had Tom when he could don them; but I went lacking till Mr. Rousby, won, no doubt, by pity

of my rags and dirt, brought me apparel from the stores provided for his slaves. Nor did I look with favor on such attire. I was used to going decently clad. Still, for rolling in the sand and wading knee deep in the water, for the life of those summer days, it sufficed.

It was our journeyings to the vessel that put it into the mind of the Captain that she might be saved ; so as Tom was slowly getting well and bothering over our poor affairs, the Captain was revolving his. By and by the thought of both bore fruit.

Perhaps it was the presence in the harbor of a big vessel, such as sometimes came in behind the curving bar of land for night and shelter, and lifted their sails and were away at glimmer of dawn, that brought them to the climax of speech. At any rate, I remembered the day well.

It had been hot and languorous till the long scarlet lights of sunset gleamed on sky and water, and the evening breeze began to blow. We went out on the bluff before the cabin to cool our heated bodies in the salt wind that came straight across the bay ; and

as we sat there on the green, wiry grass, the water softly lapping the shore on the beach beneath us, the sea-gulls and the black-heads screaming about us, the Captain put a question to Marshall boldly and bluntly.

“Why don’t you go over to Rousby Hall and stay now?”

I was lying flat on my stomach, watching a gull skimming the waves in search of supper, when he spoke, and I wriggled over and looked at Tom. His face, fairer than ever from his long illness, flushed from square chin to broad forehead, and it was some moments before he replied, then it was stiffly.

“I like staying here!”

“Here!” The Captain laughed. “Well, you can’t stay here always!” He fell silent, and the great vessel out near the harbor’s mouth glided into her place and lowered her sails.

Then the Captain spoke shortly, but with much rough kindness. He could linger no longer, he said; Marshall was well recovered, or rather waited but the slow coming of his strength. The vessel there, shipwrecked on

the sands, meant much of his wealth. She could be pumped of water, he thought, calked, refitted and made good for service. Not that he knew what to do with her then, no man could tell when she could glide again into West Indian harbor, but he could not leave her there ; and Tom, seeing his drift, seconded him warmly.

It was but right he should do so, and then he thanked the Captain till he squirmed, and praised me till I turned again flat on my face ; but I noted after all — for I was most curious to know what we would do — that there was not a word, not even a whisper as to his plans. Only the Captain must be gone at once, and I should go with him to the big vessel out there and see if they could help him.

Have I said that Mr. Rousby left us a boat? We ran it, now, off the sands, and the Captain, with two stout oars — he would not let me touch them, I caught too many “crabs” for him — pulled away on his two-mile row. The red was gone from sky and water, and the sea-gulls were abed ere we reached there.

That was the beginning of the Captain's making ready to go, and soon he and the vessel that had lain sidewise to the sands were a part of our daily life no longer.

Mr. Rousby and the neighbor from the other side of the curving land had been oft to visit us, but we had ceased to subsist on Mr. Rousby's bounty. Tom at the point of a quarrel had bought from him certain stores, and he and I made great shift at cookery, though now and then came a great hamper from one side or the other. Daily living was much like a long picnic to me.

Now my good skill at spitting fowls before open fires served me in good stead. The beach was lined with driftwood, and never shall I forget the delight of the gathering it at early dawn and starting a fire on the bluff before the cabin, and blowing it and coaxing it till it flared high in the still air and then died to glowing embers. Then, mayhap, I was ready with fish fresh caught to broil before it, and corn-cakes for the smoking skillet; and, when they were done, brown and crisp,

and Tom and I on the grass were eating them, and the harbor was reddening like a great jewel with the sunshine and the tide lapped softly below — it was heaven to me, long pent in towns and longing eagerly for free life and fresh air.

But I wondered why Tom did it.

Now I know. Much of his money had been lost. He knew not where to turn for his next venture, he knew not what chances and changes the war might bring about, he knew himself weak and broken, and he felt there was nothing so good for his healing as the quiet monotony of our days lived in the strong salt air. And so he waited.

CHAPTER VIII.

AND I gloried! Ducks could be shot from the point yonder, the water teemed with fish of the finest, and when the tide ran low there were oysters for the picking and soft-shell clams or maninoses for the digging.

I played and foraged, sailed and swam and waded, and would have cooked six meals a day had not Tom held to some form of convention. Thus on the sunny days—but now and then came a rainy day when we must keep within the cabin and strive to make a fire in the broken, draughty chimney, and I choked and sputtered with smoke and said bad words under my breath which I dared not let Tom hear, while I scuffled with the cooking.

On such a day Tom would sit at the little window, his face pitiably thin and white, his fair hair dry and deadened from

the fever, his eyes big and wistful, turned often toward Rousby Hall, and a look there I could not read.

I, too, would look that way, though I could see nothing save long lines of rain stinging into the gray sullen water and falling bleakly on the long meadow slope between the water and the sloping roof and chimney tops of the Hall. Sometimes we could see figures moving about the paths and porches,—the slaves, Mr. Rousby, so I judged them; and sometimes when the day was fine there was a gleam of white, a flitting of graceful figures, and I remembered the daughters who graced the household.

We had never gone thither. Marshall had been several times in our little boat, but the bow was never turned across the river. Mr. Rousby had grown irascible over it, and once when he was leaving us he said sharply: “The womenkind of my household speak of visiting you, sir. I would have them wait till you pay your respects properly, but they—they look upon you as a hero.”

Tom flushed uneasily. Doubtless his adventures savored little of the heroic to him.

“A hero,” emphasized Mr. Rousby, “and they would fain see your habitation on the island. ’Tis a romance that wins the woman’s heart ever!” And after that I noticed how often Tom turned his looks Hall-ward, and how often he made furtive investigations of his rescued clothing. Truth to say, his clothing was not so sorry-looking as one might have looked for. Tightly folded in his mails, they were not altogether water-soaked, and the Captain and I had done our best for them while he lay on the cabin’s bed.

His apparel looked after, he sent many an anxious glance landward; yet for days we saw only the fishermen’s boats and the shining water and screaming sea-fowls. Then, one sunny morning, when the wind was brisk and the waves ran white-capped, and there was a tingle in the air that set one’s veins athrill, we saw a flutter of white-clad figures along the meadow slope from the Hall, a lifting of canoe sails — and Tom fled cabin-ward. He resented strongly my grin when he emerged therefrom.

“Gad!” he fell upon me angrily, “you look like — you look like —” There was a blaze in his blue eyes such as I had not seen since we left Baltimore, and I was angered to the core by his tone and was about to turn haughtily away when he caught me by the shoulder.

“Tut, lad, come! Nay, I will beg your pardon humbly. I did not think, I had forgot; but that dress suits illy to stand before ladies.”

“Then I’ll not be seen of them,” I cried, still sore and angered, and bitterly aware of my nankeen trousers and round jacket and coarse shirt and bare feet.

“But you must! They are come to see the *hero*.” His voice took on a sarcastic tinge. “You are the only one, since the Captain has left. You cannot disappoint them.” And for fear I should escape, as I surely should have done, he would not let me out of his sight.

He had judged me aright. One look at his own apparel of green broadcloth, his long silk vest, and coat cut from the waist and showing his shapely limbs, on which the

trousers sat somewhat loosely, owing to his illness, one look at them and his high stock and wide-brimmed beaver, he had spent many hours in smoothing, was sufficient to make me feel the awkwardness of my own ill-fitting, slave-patterned clothes; and I waited but a chance to hide myself in marsh or loft, but such chance he never gave me. The canoe came skimming nearer and nearer. The wind was in her favor, and the canoe straight set to the island. Soon Tom was gallantly waiting, hat in hand, soon the bow grounded in the sand, and the boat was a blur of bright faces and wide skirts and rumpled ruffles.

“You would not visit us,” cried one gaily, though her eyes were keen and searching, and her cheeks went from red to white as she looked Tom from head to foot. “You would not visit us, and so—and so”—she ended her speech with a little nervous laugh and waved her hand toward her sisters; and then she stepped sedately ashore, minding her voluminous skirts carefully. The others followed her, and she began, as they stood there on the sands, to

introduce him shyly and prettily. Never had I heard a word from Tom as to his acquaintance with the daughters of the Hall, but now she went on: "This is Rosalind," to a dimple-cheeked girl nearest her, "and this is Jane," to a girl more serious-faced and dark-eyed, "and this, sir," she touched herself lightly in the breast just where the ruffles of her bodice met and crossed, "this is Miss Elizabeth Rousby!"

I saw a look of keen reproach in Tom's eyes, while the sisters chorused, "Bess! Bess!" and broke into ripples of laughter, from no cause that I could see, unless it was I, who stood awkwardly digging my bare feet into the sand. "Truth, I thought it necessary," she continued mercilessly; "you would neither visit us nor be my father's guest. Mayhap you had forgot those days in Baltimore, but a country maid has a truer memory; she is not so distraught."

I heard not Tom's protest. The young ladies seized upon me, and after one dizzy moment when the world seemed shut in by a horizon of billowy skirts and laughing faces, I suddenly found my poise and was a

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most willing captive. We went flocking up the path our feet had already worn in the bluff and over to the cabin.

There were shrieks and cries of laughter as they peered into all our shifts of house-keeping, for they were pirates, truly, and for the nonce the fortress and its in-dwellers were theirs.

Some laughed and cast sidelong glances at the bed. Perhaps it was lumpy and badly spread, for suddenly I became aware of two hollows beneath the ill-smoothed covers — one big, where Tom slept nightly, and another which would fit my smaller figure. And they looked at the pewter plates on the rude mantle-shelf, and I thanked heaven I had scrubbed them each day with sand, and that though somewhat scratched thereby, they still shone brightly.

Somehow, without a word from them that was not either jest or praise, I knew the floor was dirty, even if well swept; that there were ashes on the hearth and that stones were not good andirons; that the window should have its full complement of glass, and that there should be better seats to

offer than a log, be it ever so smoothed and silvered with sun and waves.

Tom, I suppose, was making his peace. When we had straggled around the island and seen how near the tide cut it in two behind the cabin, when we had gone quite to the far side and watched the race of water between us and the mainland, when we had come back along the wide beach of the other way and once more to the bluff, we found the sister who had named herself Elizabeth ordering the slaves about the big hamper they had brought, "to picnic with us," they said, and Tom was standing near, trying to help, but hopelessly. The sisters fell to, and with chatter and bustle and laughter forwarded the feast.

I had forgotten long ago my naked feet, and tanned face and hands, and long, rough hair, and ill-fitting clothes much like the negroes' who waited on us. No thought of further consciousness marred that day, and had it done so, one look at Marshall would have brought my joy again to its full tide. His cheeks were flushed and healthily so, his eyes full and bright and brimful of

happiness, and the tone of his voice was no longer listless, but clear and ringing.

We watched the canoe sail homeward with its crew of pretty pirates, so they had dubbed themselves once I had used the word in jest ; and then while the sunset glow was on our fair harbor and on our island, we turned to climb the bluff and stood for a space looking at each other.

“Jack !” cried Marshall, with a laugh it did me good to hear. “Jack, what was ever your favorite book ?”

And I flashed back, quick as thought, “Robinson Crusoe !” Whereat he laughed again.

CHAPTER IX.

JACK," Tom asked me the next day, "Jack, do you not think —" he stammered a little, most unlike his usual decisiveness — "do you not think we had best furbish up a bit, there's company now —"

"I should say so," I broke in. "Yesterday those young ladies saw everything."

Tom squirmed on the log where he sat.

"There wasn't a chair to offer them," I went on mercilessly, "nor a table in the room, nor a platter."

"We never missed them before," said Tom; and then he added whimsically, "Well so it is the pioneer West never misses the comforts of civilization till a petticoat's rustle tells the tale."

There was no suggestion I could make. I was too heedless even to have thought of our lack, save for the bright eyes and

gay laughter that had pricked me into sensibility.

“Well, we must see Mr. Rousby,” decided Tom finally. “Perhaps he will hire a slave to us.”

Which he did willingly. Though it had come to busy days on the plantation, there was no hint of refusal; and a few days' work put us more ship-shape. The roofing was repaired, the floor relaid and properly cleaned, the chimney rebuilt, the door was better hung; a ladder from within was fitted to the loft, a rude shelter was built before the door, and later on some other comforts found their way thither. There was a carpet of home weaving, laid mysteriously one day while we were dining at the Hall, some chairs with comfortable flag seats, and a table and a proper bedstead.

That day when we came back from the Hall the island seemed for the first time home-like. We grounded our boat on the beach and pulled her far up from the rising tide, and climbed the bluff in the slowly thickening dusk; and when our cabin loomed before us, I for one felt a thrill of joy.

And when we went to the door and pulled the latch-string, our only fastening, and Tom struck his flint and tinder and lighted a candle, he himself uttered an exclamation of pleasure. The rag carpet looked luxurious, the hearth was reddened a brilliant hue, and *andirons* winked on the hearth.

"Gad!" he exclaimed softly, "the fairies have been at work."

"Big and black ones," said I, laughing. "That was what Mrs. Rousby was about, sending Betsy off, and laughing and whispering when I went into her chamber."

"Aye, but it is proper and fine," said Tom complacently, "and many a man in the countries where I have been would think it as fine — as fine —"

"As we do the Hall," I interrupted, for spite of my growing shyness of the laughing and jesting of the young women there, the wide well-furnished hall and stately rooms and well-kept grounds were a keen pleasure to me whenever I saw them.

"And now, Jack," went on Tom briskly, "we must hire a black to wait on us, to cook and clean. He could sleep in the loft."

"I won't have him."

"Won't, indeed?" Tom flushed angrily.

"Forever hanging about us and spying upon us, and telling all we do when he goes home to the Hall."

"There are other slaves besides Mr. Rousby's," and then he added very stiffly, "There is naught of which we need be ashamed."

"He'd find a plenty to tell, whether there was or not. I want to do as I please."

"Well, you do it!"

"And have nobody hanging around." It would have spoiled the glamour of those days had we abated one whit the freedom of our living; and I was so wordy, and rebelled so strenuously, that Tom gave in, and we held to our old way.

Another converse we had, too — Tom and I. It was one of the chilly wet days in midsummer when the blazing of the drift log on the hearth was a comfort to which we drew close, while fog and mist drifted by outside.

"Jack," said Tom, as we sat about it, our

supper done, and the darkness closing early about the harbor and the water running stillly under the mist-pall, "Jack, we must write to your lawyer in Georgia."

Now I felt somehow as if the very talk of this jarred upon my happy carelessness.

"I don't see why you should," I said shortly.

"Because I am your guardian, boy, and he must know of your whereabouts. All sorts of tales are rife in such troubled times. He must hear of you and know what to do."

"You can write yourself, then," I insisted, my surliness still holding.

"So I will, and bid him look well to your affairs while we are imprisoned here."

"Imprisoned!" I blazed.

"It irks me," went on my guardian, though I seldom thought of him now save as friend and companion, "that you should be cut off from all instruction."

I made an impatient exclamation.

"It should be otherwise. Your father would have had you at school."

"Tom," I cried, "I have done nothing but study all my life, study and travel and

everywhere *study*, and my father — ” I stopped abruptly. I could not speak of him even yet.

“Aye, it was a pale-faced boy I saw first at the Golden Horse, and now you are as ruddy as a farmer.”

The strong, invigorating air and fine out-of-door life were more than tonic to me. I felt myself growing, as the corn grows on a dewy summer's night.

“Well, there is nothing we can do to better it. War-times are hard times generally. But it will not be forever; you must make up the time you have lost some day.”

I felt too indignant at such speech for answer. But Tom went on earnestly: “It is not as I would have it, lad, and when the day comes I will see to it that your father's wishes are fulfilled. He was a scholarly man.”

Tom's words had started some uneasy thought of my own affairs.

“Tom,” said I suddenly, “I left some money with that French woman in Baltimore.”

“The deuce you did ! ”

“I never carried it all about me, and when I” — I stopped lamely. There needed no words to say when and how I left. “Perhaps Mr. Rousby can get it for me when he goes next to town. Perhaps, and some clothing likewise;” and then we said nothing more. What we had said had spoiled our evening by rankling memories.

Still, altogether, it seemed for a time as if the trammels I delighted in being free from were about to close about us, but it was only for a time. These things being done, the days went by as before, save that we were more comfortable and more sociable. We went often to the Hall, and we went sometimes to the house of our new neighbor and new friend, on the lower curve of the harbor — Mr. Wilson.

But while I am talking thus minutely of our affairs, I must say this — Tom bought the island. He bought it of Mr. Rousby, who, beginning by wanting to do all for us and coming oft to the point of open rupture with Marshall about it, had found out and accepted Tom’s proud independence, and was now willing to transact with him the slender

business necessary to our living. I have not space to talk of that now, nor of how Tom husbanded his slender stock of money, nor of the details of our life, delightful as they seem when I look back on them. Mayhap by some slight reference now and then I may show a shadow of them, but now, first of all, we must have a name for our island. Tom was for giving it some title, long and high sounding.

“Pshaw,” said I, when he named them to me; “call it Sandy Isle, for that’s what it is!” And so it became, and so it is to-day.

Second, we became quite suddenly the fashion of the country-side, or water-side, for scarce a house in the region showed its chimney-top beyond the water’s gleam. We were beset with invitations.

Doubtless Mr. Rousby had spoken a good word for us, for there came hither those of Point Patience, of St. Gerards, of Preston Manor and Preston Heights, and many others.

We went to stately dinings and house gatherings; we went shooting, deer-stalking, or fox-hunting. The war had not come

very closely to them. We alone so far had suffered, if that were suffering.

Now and then the men held fiery talk ; some were loud against the heavy taxes Congress laid to meet the burdens of the war, and some were wildly patriotic and made the news of victory by land and sea the occasion of feasting and celebrating at home.

But for the main, the talk was of plantation and neighborhood affairs, of the high prices of tea and coffee, and rum and molasses, and — what touched them always and was the secret undercurrent of their anxiety — the wide waters of the bay, their easy highway for the enemy, and the danger of those who dwelt thereon.

When they talked on such themes, I watched Marshall closely and furtively, and listened for his words. I knew his early opposition. I knew his defence of the “Republican’s” strenuous articles. I looked to see if he would voice any sentiment now, changed or obstinate, but he was obstinate only in his silence. And it became a sore thing to me.

As the rumors of the war came thicker and nearer, I was itching to be up and in the thick of it, but all around me were inactive.

“Mr. Rousby,” I asked that gentleman one day, when we were dining at his house, “when next you send to Baltimore, will you not see — will you not procure a gun for me?”

“Bless my soul!” he cried, as he stopped short in the hall, his guests passing him to the porch. “Bless my soul! What do you want with it?”

“I want it for hunting,” I answered boldly. “What will it cost?”

He named the sum and I felt in my purse. I had brought it, trusting to have this word. “I have ever lent a gun when there was need of one,” he said, while I still fumbled for my money.

“I thank you,” I rejoined with utmost politeness, “but I wish one of my own.”

The old gentleman — he seemed old in my eyes, though he was in the very prime of vigor — took the money, eying me sharply the while. “I send to town within the

week," he told me after a second's silence. "I will see it is attended to. I have another such request." He was smiling shrewdly as he moved away. "It is from Marshall," he called over his shoulder, as he hurried to join the others in the porch.

When, chafing against being idle here — it was the only thought I had ever against the island — I asked Tom of it, his answer was snapped out quick and sharp :

" You'll see enough of war, and you'll see it here. Look at this harbor ! 'T would float the British fleet. With Washington so near and Baltimore above us, there'll be fighting enough." And with this prophecy in my ears, I went away dreaming of valiant deeds, and then forgot them all in the pleasure of the days.

The languor of summer was gone, the early mornings and short evenings were sharp and chilly ; there was often a fire now upon our hearth, and Tom said we must be making ready for winter. That meant gathering up the driftwood and piling it in the shadow of our chimney, and rare foraging from the mainland.

My forebears had been planters in the New World for two generations, and they had been gentlemen farmers in the Old for I know not how many. Mayhap the survival of their instinct taught me the keen delight of hoarding, or, in our Southern parlance, "providing." Even now, though within a stone's throw of one of the world's best markets, as our Lexington market has become, when the autumn days come on I feel a restless desire to stock cellar and larder, to gather stores of flour and meal, and hang the rafters with meat, and fill the bins with potatoes and apples, and stock the pantry with jars of lard and barrels of sugar—and then take mine ease with mind and body well content.

So many a day while Marshall had gone visiting I pushed my canoe up the river or creek and, landing where I would, sought for chestnuts or walnuts or purple haws or even, sometimes, persimmons, though they were not yet come to their full ripeness and mellowness.

On such a day, we started at early morn, when the autumn mist had barely lifted

from river and harbor, and hung a faint, impalpable veil over curving mainland and distant bay, and the bright sun was already warming the chilled earth and air ; when the hoar frost showed faintly on the bending grass and on our gray cabin roof, and when the wild ducks and sea-gulls were still clamoring for their breakfast out on the fringes of our island — on such a day we started off.

On the Wilson side of the mainland we had but to cross the river and we could follow the curving beach for miles away to the pine-covered point jutting into the bay ; but Rousby Hall, though nearer, was cut off from the land close to our island by a wide meandering creek, so that to reach it we must either sail directly across, which was our usual way, or else cross to the other side of the creek and walk the half mile over the fields.

To-day we were going directly over. There was a fox-hunt in progress, the scent would lay on the frosty earth some hour or two longer, and Tom and I were both to ride a hunter from the stables of the Hall.

But halfway there I changed my mind. I would not go on the hunt. I said nothing of my mood to Tom, but kept the canoe straight skimming on her course.

They had been watching for us, for out from the porch came the whole laughing bevy, the young ladies tripping along the path, holding up their long skirts daintily, and the men, who had already joined them, escorting them with gallant air. The blushing cheeks and half-veiled eyes were as bewitching as the morn — but not to me. It pleased my mischievous humor to watch Tom's irate expression as Mistress Bess, a gallant by her side, came nearer.

"Halloo," he called to Tom, "we but waited you!"

"I thank you!" said Marshall coldly, as he lifted his hat to the party.

"Your horses are already saddled," called one. "And the hounds — hear them!" as they came baying along the path.

Tom sprang ashore, and poor Mistress Bess' cheeks flushed guiltily at his greeting. To hide her confusion she moved nearer me.

“Good-morning, Jack,” she murmured, as she stood on the wet sand as near as the tide would let her. “You are to ride the bay mare to-day; ’t is the fastest horse in the stable save one.” She glanced shyly at Marshall, who was talking gaily, not heeding her.

Now Mistress Bess had a warm spot in my heart; her bright cheeks and shy, sweet eyes were more winning by far than her sister’s livelier ways, and I was angered at Tom for her distress. I had meant to sail away with no word of explanation, but now I called him, “Tom!” and waited until he came to know what I wanted.

“I shall not ride to-day,” I said, when he was by her side.

“Why, what’s the matter?”

“Not ride!”

I had done what I cared to do, they stood side by side, separated from the rest, so I gave the boat a shove out into the water and caught the sail to turn it about. “Not to-day!” I called back, laughing, and was away.

The morning was too delicious to spend in a crowd, even if it should be a fox-hunt; and I sailed back islandward, and then turned the boat up the creek — St. John's they called it.

The tiny inlets at its mouth were tree covered, and the leaves of maple and oak and hickory and poplar were scarlet and bronze and yellow, and shone like a giant posy between silvered water and deep blue sky; and the trees upon the headlands, which were of an unlooked-for boldness, were clad in every color the frost-king could paint.

By and by, the creek growing narrow and the winds between the high lands fitful and gusty, I lowered my sail and took to my oars. The land narrowed upon the silver thread on which I journeyed, the strip of sandy beach was gone, pine and undergrowth came quite down to the water-side, and where the undergrowth was slight and the purple asters bloomed I could look far away through the woodland and watch the sunlight sifting through the tree-tops and the gay leaves drifting downward.

Ah me, how fair it was! I slipped my oars softly; it was sin to be noisy in this sylvan silence, and drifted with bare head and light, delighted breath. Squirrels were chattering and whisking their bushy tails about the branches, and they were the only living thing I saw save the crows and the ever-present water-fowls.

I landed where the pine needles carpeted the shore, and filled my hands full — why I know not, I had thought myself neither soft nor sentimental — with clusters of the pale purple, starry flowers and with branches of the dogwood glowing red and scarlet fronds of sumach, and piled them in the boat's bow; and then tying her safely, I wandered inland.

It was a long, delicious day. I lay down on the crisp leaves when I liked, and laughed when others, down falling, pattered on my up-turned face. I got up and wandered on when fancy dictated. I found a bush of purple haws and ate till I wanted no more. I filled my pockets with chestnuts, lying gleaming on browning leaves; and then coming upon a tree of thin-shelled hickory

nuts, I pulled off my jacket and tied the sleeves at the wrist and filled them; then, slowly and leisurely, I went back to my boat.

The sun was high now, at noon mark, and blistering hot as it struck back from the water. The coolness of our cabin was most pleasant when I reached it, and I took my store of shell-barks to the loft, much as a squirrel would have taken his to his hollow, and with the same happy consciousness.

I lit a fire on the hearth and cooked my dinner; and then, my softened mood being gone and noting we had but a brace of fowl hanging under the shelter outside the door, I took down my gun — Mr. Rousby had been faithful to his promise — from its peg-rack over the mantle, where it hung below Marshall's, and went down to the point to watch for ducks.

When I came back I could see a party of men and women walking along the beach from Rousby Hall; and Tom, seeing my figure outlined against the bluff, waved his handkerchief. I knew the signal and rowed over for him.

“Have you had a happy day?” whispered Mistress Bess when I had reached the other side, and they were quizzing me for running off.

I nodded.

“So have I,” she whispered.

CHAPTER X.

SOMETIMES when Tom was gone gallivanting I would sail to the other side of the harbor to the Wilson's homestead. There was not an equal stateliness there, but a heartiness and cheer I liked most cordially ; and there was a fleckled-faced, blue-eyed, tomboy girl nigh to my own years, and some brothers likewise. Now of the boys' companionship — lumpish lads they were — I felt no need. The close comradeship in which Tom and I lived and in which I had lived in earlier years with my father shut me off from most boyish friendships — but Susie !

It may be that I went the oftener because I never knew the mood I'd find her in. Mayhap I'd find her busied in the kitchen, her skirts kilted about her, her round arms, where a freckle showed now and then like a spot of pale gold upon the

fairness of her skin, bared ; and then she would scarcely notice me.

“ I ’m busied, Master Jack. I ’m mixing the dumplings for the beef roasting before the fire ! ”

Truth, the savory odors of it would be most vexingly appetizing.

By and by, as I would be standing still in the deep doorway, scarce knowing what to say or do and showing it, doubtless, in every line of face and figure, she would relent. “ If you bide to dinner, you may try them ; and afterwards,” glancing quickly under her long fair lashes to see if I were duly grateful, “ we might have a ride.”

Then when the dinner was finished we would wander off to the pasture, and, catching our horses, would mount bareback and go racing along the wide, firm beach or down the lane to the “ big road ” of the county. But that was ruddy and oftentimes, as the winter grew apace, impassable, whilst the beach was ever firm and white and glistening ; there was our race-course. Sometimes I won and sometimes she, according to the beast we strode, for we rode alike,

and it was that which made the ladies of the Hall dub her a tomboy, and wonder why her mother did not keep her more restrained and ladylike.

Some such talk as this had made me less inclined to go with Tom on his jauntings thither. I know when one of them — Jane, the serious and dark-eyed, it was — said her mother should be training Susie to the backboard instead of having her racing the country like a tomboy, that I felt the first and unwarranted anger towards those who had from the beginning so befriended us. Afterwards they owed much to that same habit of racing, and afterwards, too, they were as kind to her as their warm hearts disposed them to be to all.

But Susie! It might be that some fine day when the wind sang over the waves and Marshall was abroad and I lonely, perforce, I would betake myself thither, and would find her bent above her stitchery.

“Jack,” she’d cry as soon as she heard my step within the hall, “so you’ve come. It’s just the right moment. I was fair dead with weariness!” and the white cloth would be flung upon the table.

“Let me see it!” I would declare with some pretence of criticism.

“As if you know when a seam were fairly done! Give it here!” Her head would be high in the air, and she would be assuming airs of fine ladyship now.

“Never!” I’d hold it far above my head. “Those stitches are not evenly done. They are — they are higgledy piggledy! And what is this?” pointing to a stain in the cloth.

“That is where I pricked my finger, sir. Give it here!” She would reach for it, I would jump, away we would go round and round the room, till her mother, wondering at the noise, would come hastening, and then would stand — good soul — shaking her round sides with laughter.

“Come to the kitchen, Jack,” Susie would coax. “There are potatoes, the first we’ve dug; we can roast them in the ashes, and eggs. Mother, you will let us?” And she would trip away down the wide hall as if she cared not a whit for the bit of linen for which she had been fighting so valiantly, at which I would lay it meekly down upon the table and follow her.

I loved the great high raftered kitchen where the strings of pepper and bunches of sage and savory and silvery ropes of onions hung, and there was a wide chimney corner where Susie and I — when the wind set fair with her ladyship, as it did now — would hold high revelry, while we waited the roasting of our feast.

Her mother's kindness, too, was one of the bright spots of my life. One of the bright spots! Nay, I think I recall no darkness in those days.

That autumn tide when I first knew her, it was Susie who coaxed me aside when Marshall and I went hither, and coaxed me to porch or barn or stable, and did all she could to overcome my shyness. I had known little of womankind and their companionship and when I came to know and like it, through the medium of a sunny-hearted girl, she no sooner taught me the value of it than she turned to flaunt me with the knowledge, and I could never guess whether I would find her, nose in the air and a look of half-fledged ladyhood on her face, or beaming with good-nature and

ready to join in any foray. More and more as she found me acquiescent to her humor, quiet when she was disdainful, picking up her crumbs of good humor when she chose to fling them, she clung to the former.

It would be, "Jack, what are you doing to-day, I am busied!" Her red lips would be pursed up, and her eyes glued to her task. I verily believe she ran for it when she saw my canoe coming that way. "I have no time for play. I am to have a governess if I do no better. Father threatens every day. A governess, la! what would I do with her?" And her blue eyes would laugh into mine one minute, and she would look wistfully out of the window at the gleaming water and the green grass, and the half-naked trees and the brown leaves blowing about under them. Then her needle, if it were stitchery she worked at, would fly faster than ever.

Finally one day in the broken pauses of our talk she cried, "My brothers are in the harvest field. You are idle, sir, a great lad like you; you should be at work."

"Perhaps I can find it. I'll see," I

exclaimed, as I sprang to my feet and seized my cap and ran down to my boat, beached on the shore. That was too much, even from Susie. I took refuge on our island and I kept closer at home, and my boyhood's keenness of sport and forage infected Marshall. He, too, made ready for winter.

We stored the loft with meal and flour and bacon. I added chestnuts and walnuts, and begged Tom to help me in the hulling, though he must don a pair of buckskin gloves, well worn and useless save to keep his dainty fingers from the staining, before he would touch the green and pulpy hulls and pull and beat them from the hard black nut within.

"Tom," I asked, the morning that I begged him for his aid, "you are not going abroad to-day?"

He was drawing on his gloves and fastening them then at the wrist, and he answered "No" so shortly I was sorry I had questioned him, but I went on talking. "It's fine to have a whole day to ourselves here, is n't it?"

Tom looked at me quickly and I blun-

dered on: "Not but what we have had two or three now, and it's always better than visiting and company; and — and women-folks, I am tired of them," I declared disdainfully.

Tom threw back his head and laughed until the end of our cabin echoed his shouts over marsh and sand and grass.

"And so am I," said he gravely, when he could command his voice. "But how is it? I thought you went often to Mr. Wilson's. Are the boys busy in the field?"

I looked up quickly to meet the merry glance of his eyes.

"I seldom see them," I confessed.

"Well!"

"Pshaw, it was Susie and her mother I went to see, and she —"

"Susie's mother?"

"No," and for the life of me I didn't know what to say.

"Ah well," said Tom blithely, "we'll leave them alone, you and I;" and then he struck a dramatic attitude.

"If solid happiness we prize," he recited in clear, ringing voice:

“If solid happiness we prize
Within our breast this jewel lies ;
And they are fools who roam ;
The world has nothing to bestow ;
From our own selves our joy must flow,
And that dear hut, our home.”

He made a pass at me at “our own selves,” and I struck back at him; but when he retreated to the chimney and shouted out “that dear hut, our home,” we roared with laughter, both of us.

Our doldrums were gone, and we fell to our work blithely.

We beat and thrashed the walnuts with many a good blow. We jested and laughed as lightly as two boys, as indeed both of us were. We worked in the shadow of our chimney corner, for the sun was hot on one's back when one was stooping to such work, until the shadow grew less and less, and I stood upright, wiping the perspiration from my face.

“It's hot!” I declared.

“And my back aches!” cried Tom. “I suppose youngsters like you have no backbone.”

I put my hand behind me and managed a whimsical groan.

“Lord, what do we want with them all, anyway?”

“I’ll show you. Wait till the snow and ice come, and we have to stay in our cabin all day. Tom!” I exclaimed in dismay, as I saw the little shudder that shook him at my words, “Tom, I believe you are getting tired of the island.”

It was the keenest reproach I had ever made him, save one in my own mind, and that for the nonce I had forgotten.

“And that were treason most despicable. Harbor not a thought of such, I prithee! Come, rake these things out, separate the grain from the chaff!”

“There, we have finished them.”

We spread the freed nuts out on the grass for sun and wind to dry.

“I am hungry, Sir Cook, as hungry —” I tilted my head and looked up at the sun overhead.

“It’s high noon,” I declared; “come on.”

We went around to the shelter before the cabin door and stood looking on the scene I ever loved.

The wind blew across the harbor with a chill at its core, despite the bright sun overhead, and the waves ran bluer than the blue sky, with sparkles in their breasts like sparks hammered out between wave and sun. Sea-fowls were screaming about the island fringes, and a wedge of wild geese was flying low and clamoring as it went. For the life of me I could see naught to make one weary. The very elixir of life and the deepest living came thrilling along the currents of the air, and the music of life sang in the lispings of the waves and the sighing of the dying reeds and grasses.

But Tom saw it not with my eyes.

"Well, well," he cried, with gaiety a little forced, "'t is time I applied myself to cookery. I've vowed myself a selfish drone a thousand times to see you. Jack, we should have a black!"

"Hem!" I grunted in disapproval.

"Well, you'll have to teach me!" He flung off his blue coat and tossed it on the bed, where the brass buttons blazed in the sunshine streaming in at the open door, and then, as if that were not enough ado, he

must send his vest after it, and roll his sleeves to the elbow.

“Tom, you look —”

“You never saw any one look half so fine. Where is the meal, and that wooden bowl, and the salt? Lord, how quickly it gives out!” Salt was the dearest of all our stores, and the cost of it was more every time we ordered it.

“We might make it from the water,” I ventured, “evaporating it;” but Tom only laughed at the idea. “You must have a good fire. I’ll fix it.” I busied about the hearth, pulling out the glowing embers and putting the skillet thereon.

“Gad!” cried Tom, “I’ll have an ash cake; no skillet for me!” He was mixing the meal and water with a hand unutterably awkward.

“Why, how can you? There are no cabbage leaves.”

“As if I would be balked by a cabbage leaf!”

He was already shaping the pone, and he swore he would not be cheated. He knelt before the hearth, and, bending on all fours,

blew the ashes carefully from one spot. Here he placed the pone and covered it with fine hot ashes and put red coals on the top of the ashy blanket; and then as he sat cross-legged on the carpet before the hearth I thought, as I often did, how handsome, how manly he was! He was stripped to his shirt, and a silk handkerchief was knotted about his firm white throat; the thatch of fair hair on his head was damp with perspiration, and dusty with the ashes.

Our senseless words and laughter had made us oblivious of aught outside; and, truth to say, we were so accustomed to sighting our visitors from afar and having long moments of preparation that we dreamed not of surprises. Now we were startled by a peal of girlish laughter.

Tom sprang to his feet, and, seizing coat and vest, went flying up the ladder to the loft.

"Go see who it is, Jack, quick!" he begged as he fled.

"It is Mr. Rousby's daughters and some of the gentlemen of the neighborhood," I called after him. "I will meet them."

“For the Lord’s sake keep ’em outside awhile,” he pleaded, looking down the open trap in the loft.

“All right!” I ran out and flung the door to behind me.

They were waiting on the bluff for some loiterer.

“Aha, Master Jack, we’ve caught you napping now!”

“It’s the most delightful dream I ever had,” I declared boldly. I was bound to forget all about myself and fight for time.

“Hear him!” cried one of the sisters. “He beats you all; now had you, sir —” she turned to finish her war of words with the gallant nearest her.

“Is the boat safe?” I called down to the young man who was pulling her further on the beach. “The tide makes in strongly here. Wait a moment!” I begged the women, and ran down the bluff and made great show of fastening the boat.

“Come on!” called those above us, “we have only a half-hour to stay.”

“Oh, yes!” cried the dimpled daughter — Rosalind — when I was again with them;

“we caught you this time. Where were you that you did n’t see us?”

“Now, Rosalind,” broke in Jane, “you know we were sailing up the creek and the island hid us.”

“And there was no one to meet us at the beach,” pouted Rosalind.

“Surely you had assistants enough,” exclaimed one of their attendants.

“We had no idea of coming at all,” said Jane bluntly, “only Bess would have it so.”

“Where is Marshall?”

“There he is!” I cried with a breath of relief, for Tom on the instant showed himself at the cabin door.

There was nothing about the cabin now to make one tingle with shame as they went flocking in, only a home comfortable enough for a man and boy “in retirement,” and Tom welcomed them with dignity that might have been that of a lord within his castle. Only I caught, or fancied I caught, now and then some slight show of haughty stateliness, such as I had been aware of when I first saw him in the office of the Golden Horse, but had well-nigh forgot.

It was when he spoke to Mistress Bess I saw this look flash out upon his face, which grew paler for the moment ; but the young women so beset me that I could think only for myself and then not fast enough.

How could they so see everything and find out everything and know everything ? What had they to do with the time I took Susie rowing or our last race when the horse had stumbled and thrown me headlong in the water and I had gotten a wetting ? Why should their hints and questions, merry as they were, so sting me ? Well, well, many another boy has felt as I did then, manly and strong and self-reliant, until he was face to face with a pretty woman scarce more than a year or two older than he, and yet making him feel a clumsy whelp.

My ears never ceased their burning, nor did the warmth creep back to my finger tips for hours after being the butt of their teasing. Still deep in my heart was a warm feeling for Mistress Bess. She, too, was shy ; I had read her blushes and her half-veiled glances. She was slighter and more girlish-looking than the sisters, and her

dark eyes, neither blue nor black and yet not altogether gray, said all manner of things to one when she was won to talk. Now, though her speech was saucier than its wont, her eyes were dark and sad when she fell silent.

“You’ll take us over the island again,” she cried merrily, “and the men shall be left behind.” She glanced at them coquettishly as they stood about the hearth.

“So be it,” said Tom gaily. “Gentlemen, you’ll join me in a smoke while we are deserted.”

The men looked dubious.

“Of course,” cried Mistress Bess again, “the very thing!”

“Faith, a smoke would go well!”

“You’ve worked so hard all morning. Come on, Jack, you can be our host!”

I looked to see if the shot told, but Tom, with utmost politeness, was handing to his guests the pipes we had fashioned from corn-cobs of the season’s growing and the hollow reeds of which we found abundance in our marsh.

“They are the best you’ve ever held

between your teeth," he declared, "and the tobacco is of the best."

Somehow our loitering about the island was a dreary one, our jests fell flat, we were not long away, and when we sighted through the open door the group about the hearth, the wreaths of smoke floating above their heads to the rough low rafters, it made too cheery a picture. It jarred upon the young women, who would like to have thought themselves missed.

"You are too comfortable to disturb," cried one of the sisters; "we'll not come in."

"Then we will come out in the open!" exclaimed Marshall, knocking the ashes from his pipe and coming out to talk to Mistress Jane, the others following him.

I went into the cabin, and poor Mistress Bess followed me. "Have you a quill and ink?" she whispered, looking nervously about.

The quill and ink-horn stood ever on the rude mantle-shelf hobnobbing with the pipe and tobacco jars, and on the peg-rack above, our guns. I reached for the quill at once,

but could find no writing paper, and when I would have called Marshall, she clapped a soft hand on my mouth.

“Here, here!” She seized a card from the pack that was likewise on the shelf, and smiled as she saw it was the ace of hearts. “This will do,” she whispered; and dipping the quill in ink she wrote a few words where she stood against the table.

“Give this to him,” she begged, and we needed no mention of names. I slipped it into my pocket, while I looked into her eyes and could have sworn they were as dark as a fawn’s and as pathetic.

She slipped away, and when I followed her was saying, “We must be going. ’T is past our dinner hour.”

“Why, surely,” began Marshall, “you will dine with us?”

I thought of the ash-cake and groaned inwardly. “Oh, no,” they swore, “we’d not put Jack’s cookery to the test. Come go with us. There’s room for two in the boats.”

“And in the dining hall!”

I shook my head when I caught Tom’s

glance, and spite of all their protestations he would not.

We watched them sail away and turned back to our quiet cabin, over which the gay whirlwind had blown, and Tom threw himself moodily in the chair by the table.

“The ash-cake is all right,” I assured him, as I raked it out and carried it to the door and poured a gourd of water over it to wash the ashes from the crust, “and there is some cold fowl; we’ll have to make that do.”

“Aye, it’s all right!” said Tom still dreamily. “Better is” — he broke himself a piece of the steaming bread. “How does it go? ‘Better is a dish of herbs upon the house-top than a full dinner and a contentious woman.’ For the life of me I don’t know if that’s the way it goes, but it’s all the same; it’s true, too, true!”

But that was before I gave him the card.

CHAPTER XI.

I AM as hungry as a wolf," he cried when he had read it.

"You have eaten little enough for a day or two," I said carelessly.

"Tut, I'll make amends!"

And he did; and then resting his arms upon the table and his head in his hands, he turned his face once more toward the Hall, and looked dreamily out on the sunlit harbor, his face as bright as the scene without. Yet the card held a scant half-dozen words, and the first of these I had seen — "Forgive me."

By and by, as I busied about the cabin, Marshall spoke of the matter. There are two kinds of confidants to which it is easiest to unburden one's self, the young who are not yet entangled in the meshes that surround one in the thick of life, and the old who have passed through the press

and look back with clearer vision. Both see things in truer values. And the confident friendship of a young and ardent nature is a thing to be desired, earnestly.

So it was that Marshall told me many things that would never have passed his lips to older men ; and after he had been silent for a happy thoughtful space, he turned towards me : " They think I am no true patriot, Jack."

My heart jumped and turned sick and faint within me, to hear my only doubt of him put in such cold words.

" Is it patriotic to rush with foolhardiness into war ? "

I was silent and fumbled with nervous fingers amongst the few dishes I was putting in a small cupboard in the chimney corner.

" Is it patriotic when you see a government bent on self-destruction to praise it or to make no comment concerning it ? "

Still I made no answer.

" Come ! " He sprang to his feet. " Once for all, if we fend for ourselves, you are not going to do all the fending." And

from that day he would do his part, though I often wished otherwise.

“What think you?” he added whimsically.

“Now the war is begun,” I began hesitatingly, but went on more boldly, “what would you — what could any one do? We are attacked, we must defend ourselves.”

“Aye, that we will! And there we’ll win, if ever.”

“You said there would be fighting here.”

“And here we will defend ourselves. Hear me, boy! This stupid president and his cabinet have gotten us in a hole they know not how to pull us out of. Wait till it comes home to men how deep he’s pulled us in, and every man finds he’s fighting for himself and his home —”

“‘We’ll never give up the soil!’” I shouted, calling the rallying cry which had just begun to rouse the men of the Northern States, and was filtering down our way.

“And we’ve got to fight for it right here or I’m no prophet,” said Tom calmly.

“What would you do?”

“Wait and see,” snapped Tom.

“Come, come outside!” he called shortly after. “Bring your gun; ’t is time you were learning soldierly arts!” And Tom lost his sarcasm in the real interest of what followed. He set up a target on the hillside and taught me to handle my gun and hold myself in soldierly fashion, and to march by sign and countersign; and when I would know whence came his knowledge he vowed “it was a thing every man in Georgia knew, the militia looked out for that.” And I learned many things.

So went the early winter and a gay Christmas-tide. Hard on its heel came rumors that a British fleet sailed for the Chesapeake. The anxiety those about us felt broke out afresh. Whether we went abroad or visitors came to us the talk was the same — what should be done?

On one thing all agreed. Knowing the tale of British outrage on the New England coast, they resolved to conceal their valuables and flee from their homes, once the enemy’s ships were seen beyond Piney Point.

In February came the news that the fleet was, indeed, in Hampton Roads. But for a time the winter stood our friend. The cold was bitter and intense. The harbor was frozen in such fashion as our neighbors had never seen it. We went walking to Rousby Hall and to the Wilson's; and while such frost lasted, we dwelt secure. But it broke in a night. The soft south winds beginning to blow, in less than twenty-four hours we saw our glistening harbor breaking, melting, and soon after, the ice-floes floating on the ebb-tide bayward; soon, again, the water ran open and sparkling and free.

Then it was agreed amongst the planters along the coast of bay and river that heaps of wood and fagots should be piled upon the headlands, and, at the first sight of hostile ships, should be fired. Catching the sight of one, the next planter must set his signal, until the blazing beacons far up the bay should warn the people to make ready for flight.

I went down to Piney Point to help build the brush heap there. We laid pine and

fat-wood, oak and hickory branches, corn-stalks from the near-by field, pine saplings from the clearing; and never a night but what I watched for its blazing.

Did it rain, I feared the wood would be so wet there would be no burning when the need of it came; did it snow, I fancied the heap like an Indian's wigwam, snow-covered and snow-soaked. When the harbor ran fierce and white-capped, I gazed toward it; when the sleeting rain shut us in so we could scarcely see beyond our shores, I still looked that way when I went to door or window for a glimpse of the outside world; or when the snow blanketed us and shut us from outside visions.

When the spring winds blew about our cabin and sang in the chimney-top, I thought of the drying heap. Once we sailed down to it and built it up again—the Wilson boys and I—and put fresh dry wood in the heart of it; and then one night ere I went to bed, looking, as I did last of all, out into the night I saw, running up against the darkness of night, the ruddy gleam of its burning.

I needed to speak no words to Tom, who was standing by my side. Our fire was low and the embers ash-covered for the night. We had no valuables to hide. Tom carried our money upon his person. We ran down to the boat, pushed off, and made for Rousby Hall.

Now from the other point of our curving harbor the signal flashed, and I knew that for many miles the beacons gave their red warning. For a space my fingers trembled so I could scarce bend them around the oar I had seized. The weirdness of the night, starry and sharp, awed me; the water ran dark and sullen under the starlight, and there, at the entrance of our beautiful peaceful harbor, blazed the messages that told us we might fear any fate for the quiet, happy homes by the water-side.

The Rousbys were all ready for their flight. The women were pale and quiet, but their doings in such case had been so often talked of they had, now, but to follow the dictates of their memory.

Most of the noise and confusion came from the negroes. They were groaning and

praying, and calling out snatches of hymns and Scripture. Mr. Rousby and his overseer stayed with them, and there we found him, near the quarters.

“Marshall,” he called, as soon as he glimpsed us, in the quick decisive tones which were apt to enforce obedience, “you will go in the carriage with the women, you and Jack. I see you have your weapons. God only knows what need there may be of them !”

“We must stay with you, sir,” said Tom firmly. “This is the post of danger.”

“And I give you the post of honor! I cannot leave the slaves.” And then coming closer he whispered, “I dare not.”

There had been ugly rumors recently. The British had set forth a proclamation as to their freedom, and to their deeds which, had the negroes known it, might have run like fire amongst their ranks; and which, somehow had made a vague restlessness, a nightmare dread that while the men faced the enemy, there might be a foe at home would do deeds horrible beyond the telling. This was the fear that in the days to come

tied so many men and kept them rusting in watchful anxiety at home.

"The women will be safe," said Tom. "We had best stay with you."

"Can't a man command his own plantation!" Mr. Rousby spoke shortly. "You are too good a soldier to question an order. Do as you are bid!" He put his hand on Tom's shoulder and turned him houseward. "You, too, Jack!" And at that order we left him.

The doors of the great Hall were flung wide, the candles flickered in the draught until there was scarcely light enough to see the confusion. The women were there, cloaked and bonneted.

"Ah, Jack!" cried Mistress Bess, in a tone of relief I could not think was meant for me alone. She knew Marshall could not be far away.

"Jack, is the fleet coming in?" "Could you see?" "Are the ships in sight?" "Where is father?" "Isn't the carriage ready?" "How slow they are! I am fair dead of fear." "Did you see them?"

"We could see nothing," said I, answer-

ing this last question. "Tom thinks the signals may have been set ere they passed the first beacon, and we may not see the ships before morning."

"Ah, my muff!" cried Rosalind, "I had clear forgot it! Jane, run for some blankets. Oh, we will freeze!"

At that I had to laugh.

"You need n't laugh at such a time as this, and you know it is cold, it's fairly midnight."

"Why does n't the carriage come?"

"Hush, dear, hush!" pleaded gentle Mrs. Rousby, who had been hastily packing a basket of food. "Be quiet!" She stood for a second looking with tear-dimmed eyes about her. "If all be true they tell of them, we may never see our home again."

"Hush, mother," pleaded Mistress Bess, "perhaps they may not even enter the harbor. We must go! Ah, there is the carriage." She tucked her hand through her mother's arm under her pelisse, and I on the other side gravely offered her my escort.

Tom stood waiting by the carriage door.

A negro was at the head of the restless horses and another on the box. The candle gleam showed him ashy white, and his shaking fingers were little equal to managing the horses.

"Get in quickly!" called Tom, as he lifted Mrs. Rousby up the steps, and then the sisters one by one.

"You must come with us," pleaded Bess, "there is room!" But I pulled away and made pretence of searching for robes and blankets and wrapping the women carefully.

"Where are you going?" called Tom, as I turned quickly away.

"Wait! Hand me my gun!" He sprang up beside the driver. I handed him his weapon and he laid it across his lap. I could see the shine of the barrel in the cold starlight, as the horses gave a plunge and were away.

I ran towards the quarters. I had expected a blaze of wrath from Mr. Rousby as I told him boldly, "They are gone. I am going to stay with you."

At the sharp sound of the retreating car-

riage wheels the groaning of the negroes broke out afresh. The lights from the open doors shone on wild scenes, but Mr. Rousby with alternate coaxing and swearing kept some control over them and brought them to order. They were ready to march.

“Jack!” cried Mr. Rousby, soon as I bespoke him, “take this fellow.” He called a negro lad to him, one of the house servants who tended the fires. “Look to the locking of the house, cover the fires, close the shutters, lock and bar the doors; then follow. We go straight down the chapel road. March! get ahead there! march!”

By the time we reached the house they were across the lawn, lost in the darkness. The negro lad and I were alone, and he was so wretchedly afraid I bade him wait in the hall as I ran from room to room. I scraped the logs and embers on each hearth hurriedly together, and blanketed them with ashes. I wrestled with shutters so long unused that they hung rusty on their hinges. I blew out the glittering candles, and before their flickering was done shuddered at the ghostly loomings of the great

beds, dusky in their hangings; and in my hurry, in the last room of all, I ran into a table, sent it crashing, and fell headlong after it. As I stumbled to my feet I knocked a box of shell-work open and a silhouette rolled out. Even in the anger of my awkwardness and amidst the thrills of awesome feelings that were creeping over me, I felt a second's mirth — the room was Mistress Bessie's and the silhouette, clear cut as a Greek's, was Tom's. I thrust it in my breast, trusting to use it as a jest and turn her teasing, and ran clattering down the broad stair, my footsteps echoing like cannonadings in the empty house.

I called the negro. We barred the great leaves of the door which were wont to stand winter and summer opened to the meadow slope and the flashing bay beyond, and then I turned the huge key of brass in the lock of the front door.

Never since its building had Rousby Hall been forsaken. Now it stood dark, forbidding, its chimney-tops looming against the starlit sky, reddened near its rim by the beacon fires; but I had not a thought for

it, neither its sentiment nor its sadness. I was filled with a desire to overtake Mr. Rousby; and the negro being moved by a like impulse, we fled across the lawn. The faster he ran, the faster ran I for fear of being left behind, and my speed served to lend wings to his nimble heels. Before they had reached the "big road" we were with them.

It was dawn when we reached the cabin, newly built on the outskirts of a fresh cleared field, where the women and Marshall waited us. There we rested, and there the family decided to stay. Mr. Rousby took the slaves a few miles further on where he found quarters for them. Then he returned.

All that day we waited in anxious fear, with no sound about us save that of our own voices or the whispering of the spring winds in the budding woods. Mr. Rousby slept on the robes and blankets piled in a corner of the cabin, the women loitered about and talked in low tones, but I was eaten with disquietude. Did the British fly their flag in our beautiful harbor? Was our island home unvisited?

The sting of such thoughts was past endurance. I stole from the group to which I had been talking, passed the cabin, and came upon Marshall and Mistress Bess gathering violets. Gathering violets! I was full of scorn of Marshall. What matter if the ground at the forest's edge were purple with them or blue with wild forget-me-nots? What matter if the day were soft and sunny, and the sky gleamed blue overhead, and the winds were laden with the smell of new leaves? I had no heart for it. I loitered on to where the horses were tied in the woods. No one noticed me. I loosed one, sprang on his back, and turned his head homeward. The woods made soft and silent highway. Unseen and unheard, we slipped away. We pounded along the clay road or softly through the sand, until we were at the mouth of the lane and before the big gate. Then I went cautiously. I drew my beast off to the bordering wood when his hoof-beats fell softly. I peered through long vistas of pine, but saw never a sign of a scarlet coat. I neared the second gate, turned into it, came to the edge of the

wood, and saw — fields greening with wheat or freshly ploughed for corn, running down to the sparkling water, and in their midst the Hall, deserted, forsaken, lifting its smokeless chimney-tops to the soft blue sky.

I ventured nearer, looking warily for surprise ; but when I drew rein at the lawn gate and looked out over the harbor, I saw it as it had shone yesterday, purple and silvered and peaceable, and with quick, joyous visions I gazed upon the white stretches of our island and the outlines of our cabin.

For this once, the terror had passed us by.

CHAPTER XII.

LITTLE by little came the tale from the country where the enemy had landed. Annapolis, seeing the beacon fires, had set her bells ringing, gathered her state papers and valuables, and fled inland. That was at three of the morning. The fleet must have passed us before midnight, and had they minded coming thither we had scant time for flight. Then we heard of the fright in Baltimore, and how the enemy lay in the upper bay and harassed the country.

Elkton and Havre-de-Grace and Frenchtown, stores destroyed, houses burnt, ships fired, bridges blown up, mills wrecked; Fredericton and Georgetown, pillaged and burnt. The news of it with many a story of horror filtered down to us, and we thanked God for the peace of our country side. All that year it held. The fleet, that mischief done, went back to its wrathful watch near Norfolk.

Yet we dwelt in alarms. Many of the valuables of the households we visited were safely hidden and remained so. There was a nervous strain and tension everywhere, and men told with bated breath of the enemy's deeds in Virginia. There was an undercurrent, too, darker and more dreadful, of negro foment. There was a secret amongst them, and stolen midnight meetings and strange negroes were found about the country and sent scurrying out of it.

We kept a semblance of the old routine. Summer came and went on our quiet island, but not the same delicious careless days of the year gone by. We visited, we sailed the harbor, I roamed the woodland, we hunted, fished, yet had the days scarce gone around to the twelvemonth when danger and disaster were upon us.

It was the very first of June of the year 1814, and it was such a day as brings one's pulses to the full. We had been practising at the target, Tom and I, and had thrown ourselves upon the green grass at the bluff's bold edge to rest, when echoing over the waters came a dull booming, loud, persis-

tent. At the sound of it Marshall went white and I felt cold with nervous dread.

"Where is it?" I queried, as we listened.

"Down there beyond the river's mouth."

"It can't be — no, it is on the water."

My first thought had been that the enemy had landed on the soil of Maryland nearest the Potomac, and the militia were striving to drive them back. I ventured this guess to Tom.

"No," he declared, "the militia is not sufficiently organized to give battle, else they would have done so earlier."

"Then," said I, "it must be the flotilla which we have heard was fitted in Baltimore for our defence."

"So I think!"

The booming was louder and closer. Now we knew the British fleet had ventured nearer and nearer, until it lay in the Potomac, and that the water-side on either hand had been desperately ravaged; that houses had been burnt, barns rifled, furniture destroyed and carried off, until the only tale I knew to parallel their deeds were those of the old piratical days when

Dane and Norwegian harassed England. Just so they laid us waste. So it was that we had been living, seeing our day of dread creeping closer and closer and knowing that it would come. That booming there was the breaking of its dawn, and we knew it well.

“Look over on the beach there,” I cried, pointing towards the curve before the meadow about the Hall. “There is Mr. Rousby and all his household.” I sprang to my feet. “And there is Mr. Wilson also,” as I looked to the other side. “They are waving to us from Mr. Rousby’s. Come on!” called Tom, running down to the beach; and once more we pushed off our boat and rowed across, terror bearing us company.

We found the group on the beach quite calm. Mr. Rousby was even jubilant. “Barney has found them, sir!” Barney was the brave commander of the flotilla, which had sailed from Baltimore for the protection of the exposed country along the water. “Barney has found them, and he’ll give ’em a dose I warrant you!”

“But he is not strong enough to fight the fleet,” said Tom.

Mr. Rousby gave him an irascible glance. “No, but —”

“Look there!” I called, for around the fringe of pines I saw the gleam of a sail. A vessel hove in sight, another and another; the firing was incessant. We could see the puff of smoke and belch of flames, as the largest of the shipping swung to and the rest came gliding by her to safety, nearer and nearer into the harbor; then the other side — whether it were friend or foe — being driven from the refugee’s heels, we saw them close together and come to anchor. As the smoke died away and the flags floated out on the air, we could see at the head of the largest a broad red pennant, and then from another a flag of white, and from a third, one of blue.

“Hurrah, hurrah!” I cried, “hurrah for Barney and the red, white, and blue!”

I verily believe every soul of them joined, women and all, in the cry, for when I stopped my capering, Mr. Rousby was blowing his nose vehemently, and calling to one

of the negroes, "Get that boat, sir; run her out. Get the sail and oars, too!" I was seeing everything through a mist, but even then I could see some trembling lips and wet lashes.

"We will pay the Commodore a visit," he said in stately manner. "Jane, you and your sisters had best return to the house. I feared your mother was not well. See to her," he commanded, and sprang into the boat, Tom and I following him.

Even as we sailed I noted the frightened sea-fowl, the circling gulls and darting black-heads and screaming fish-hawks, and it seemed an ominous thing—that warlike array within our harbor; but most ominous of all, a great watch-dog of a brig dropped into position, before we reached the Commodore, and lay, at the river's mouth, like a British bulldog watching, watching.

What a welcome we got from the Commodore! His decks were not yet cleared from the action, his men were grimmed with powder, but his dress was spotless, his manner stately and genial at once.

"Not a man hurt," he boasted when Mr.

Rousby asked him of the engagement.
“We aimed for Tangier Island.”

“Would you had reached it!”

“Ah,” with a keen look at the planter,
“we intend to break up the negro encampment there.”

“Where every black villain who can escape his master has taken refuge.”

“They are drilling them for a negro regiment.”

“They have one, sir, already in their service.”

“Well, we wished at least to break this up; the British guard is not overly strong. A little below here we met two of the enemy’s schooners and several barges. We gave chase; we fairly had ’em when out of the Potomac comes the Dragon, seventy-four guns, and all the rest of ’em, and we had to take to our heels.”

I left them fighting it over again, for at the instant a boat put out from the vessel where flew the flag of white, and the man commanding the crew — yes, I would have known him anywhere, in any dress, even the uniform which became his round figure and

grizzled face but illy. I started to point him out to Tom, but he was too intent upon the Commodore's words, so I hastened to the side of the vessel he was approaching.

"Captain!" I called, as he clambered aboard.

"Man alive, it's Jack! Name o' wonder, boy, what have you been doing?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing? Well, it's time you were. Nothing —"

"There was nothing to do," I said hotly, answering more the half-scornful wonder of his voice than his words.

"It's time you found something, a great youngster like you. Well, you've been growing anyhow; you are bigger than the lieutenant on this boat. Jackson!" he called, and a smart-looking young fellow lounging near us, and looking to my eyes inordinately proud of his epaulettes, came loitering up. "Here is a young fellow who has found nothing to do for a year or two but grow up."

"Glad to have you join the service," said the young officer indolently. "Old as I am?"

“Fifteen !” I was angered through and through, both with my old friend’s welcome and this cockerel’s insolence. I had lived too long and too intimately with older men not to resent it.

“The Commodore was second mate at fourteen,” said the officer languidly, “and commander at sixteen. It’s his proudest boast,” then after a little pause, “or one of them.”

The Captain saw my discomfiture. “Well, it’s never too late, you know ! Look there !” He pointed to the boats, sloops, and barges, small and large, sixteen in all. “There’s room for many a man. But come, this is not — why, boy, I rowed over to ask leave to visit the island. Is all as I left it ?”

And we fell into talk of our daily affairs, until Marshall called that he was going. There was a hearty greeting between him and the Captain, and the Commodore’s face lighted with good-nature when he heard the tale of our friendship, our shipwreck, and our island. He vowed he would visit us, and came to us once or twice and swore

he was mightily pleased ; and he went to Rousby Hall and the Wilson's likewise, and in his bluff, hearty manner made to himself friends of the people of the water-side in the week that he lay there, the brig and her attendants at the river's mouth, where another gunboat joined her and then another, and then on the seventh day of her watch, came a great frigate and a sloop-of-war.

Then the Commodore was compelled to retreat to shallow water, where his small boats might have some vantage in the fight which was close at hand.

We watched them lift anchor, and there was no chance of flight now ; Mrs. Rousby lay ill to death. Mr. Rousby, his overseer, Marshall and I, were a household guard. Should we need further help the militia of the county, ill-organized, fear-stricken, had promised it. We watched them lift anchor, glide by our island, by the long reach of Point Patience, the enemy close upon their heel. And the next day and the next, the next and the next again, there was booming and thundering that

echoed over the country and through the chamber where Death seemed hovering.

How hard it was to feel bound by every tie, as Marshall had put it, bound to stay dull and inactive, and to know that no further away than St. Leonard's Creek men were spilling their blood for our safety!

Barney was neither captured nor free, but held his own; so for a month. Then again the booming, booming, all through the summer's afternoon, and at break of day the British fleet, beaten off, was stealing away around Piney Point.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. ROUSBY'S fever had left her. Mr. Rousby had gone on pressing business to Baltimore, leaving Tom to watch over his household. Barney was up the river, sending a most urgent message to us that should the enemy appear in the harbor we should give him swift warning. I felt as if we, at the river's mouth, kept watch and ward. A tedious one it became to me, for a very itch for adventure possessed me. The Captain's words, the young officer's insolent air, the life pounding in my own veins, were a constant incentive.

Marshall was much at the Hall, and the days fell again dull and quiet. Solitary paddling and roaming no longer pleased me. Marshall, seeing my dullness, vowed one morning he should bide at home as they did not need him at the Hall, and at his words I felt a most unreasonable joy, a boyish rebound from my doldrums.

The dawn of that day was fair, with clear sky save in the scarlet east ; and the bay lay shimmering, gleaming, without a wave to mark even its current, only a slow heave about its lazy edge and a long billowy roll on its breast now and then, while the tide rested before its turn.

I was as merry as the wild fowl flitting about the fringes of the island, and could have whistled like the mocking-bird that carolled from our cabin roof, for Tom and I planned many things and we had the whole of the long sunny day for the doing of them. Therefore no sooner had I flung open the cabin door and breathed a long breath of the strong salt air than I fell into song, and curiously enough I shouted out :

“ Our march is on the turnpike road,
Our home is at the inn.”

It brought Rob and the big blue wagon, the prancing horses and jingling bells, so close before me, I must rub my eyes to shut out the sight of them ; and here was our island. Tom was moving lazily about in the cabin, and out there—I looked with

wide-open eyes to see it all, to feel the life of it once again, and as I looked from glistening wave to curving shore, from land to land, I fairly groaned. There on the beach was one of the daughters of the Hall, waving a big white something in her hand. It was the signal that Tom was needed, and I was fairly angered to see how eager he was to be gone, and how impatient at the light winds which kept us tacking to and fro. Finally we took to our oars, and, hot and damp, grounded our boat at Mistress Bessie's feet, who stood daintily fresh and provokingly cool, her slender figure and billowy skirts outlined against the green slope behind her.

"Mother is worse," she told him shyly. "Not seriously, no! but we thought best — do you think we should summon Doctor Conroy?" And so I left them, Mistress Bess pale and troubled. I noted it as I did her light dress, beflounced and beribboned, and the thin morocco shoes wet with dew, and Tom, too, fair and stalwart and anxious. A good enough picture it was, the two standing there, the water lapping near their

feet and the green land running up beyond ; but the grouping of it had spoiled my day.

I sailed out idly into the harbor. The day was young, and I knew not what to do with it. I tacked back and forth, watching the gulls skimming the waves and splashing under them for their prey ; watched the crabs scuttling through the clear water, the shiny gleam of swimming fish and the green trailing banners of the seaweeds ; and then, the wind springing up, as it often did in the late morning hours, the boat heeled over and we went splitting through the waves, white capped now, and for the mere joy of it I kept her to it.

She sailed beautifully, our little "Hawk" ; and one other thought likewise, for, sailing near the Wilson's house, Susie ran down to the beach and waved to me.

"Come in to the shore !" she called.

"What for ?" Her ladyship had been somewhat peevish and I was on my guard.

"I want to go sailing !" She put her white hands up to her rosy mouth and called through them. The wind blew the

sunbonnet from her head and the fair hair about her face, smiling and wondrously sunny, so I obeyed. But I was somewhat silent as we sailed out again into the harbor, seeing which she must make herself bright and charming as the day, and nothing would serve but that I must come ashore and dine with her and her mother. The father and brothers were in the far-off field, where their dinner would be sent, and they would be alone.

Dinner over, we must have a ride. True, the horses were brought with dignity to the door and Susie sprang sidewise on her young lady's saddle, but the ride was none the less a mad race and frolic.

The beach was firm and wide. A strong whistling wind which blew from midday to sunset through all but few of our summer days was bringing the tide thundering along the beach and dashing the spray against our horses' flanks, too used to such to notice or care for it. Susie's fair hair whipped about her rosy face, her blue eyes shone bright as stars, and her teeth gleamed between her rosy lips.

We rode sedately down the curve, around the pond with its fresh water so near the salt waves of the harbor, down past the hollow of Mattapanient, and out of sight. Then we were free. Without a word we loosed our horses' reins and leaned forward. The joy of it! The horses flew neck and neck. The wind whirled off my cap and the waves caught it and kept it. I did not even turn to see. Susie's skirt blew out straight, and shook and bellied as we raced onward; she struck at it with the dogwood switch she carried, but that was all. The sun blazed down on us, but the air was as cool as autumn. Past fields and marshes, and woods and reeds, we raced on, neither out-distanced, until we were forced to draw rein and own our beasts well trained, and we knew who had done the training.

The beach curved fair and true as an Italian picture, and far down at the very end was a point, pine-fringed. It was a good six miles away, and we had never ridden so far, but now nothing would suit Susie but to push on. Her mother, good, easy soul, would make no ado, and her

father and brothers were well away. It looked like a print, she would have it, of a palm-fringed isle in a book of her father's, and it was her whim to see it nearer. On and on we rode ; the pines loomed nearer and nearer, until our horses went slowly under the green, singing branches and we rested in their shadow and listened to the music overhead and the dashing of the waves near by.

We sprang from our horses to rest on the pine needles and to look with delighted eyes along the wide blue Chesapeake. Above our harbor not a vessel showed, the water ran tumultuous, but no sail flecked the bay. We turned our eyes the other way. I sprang to my feet and faced Susie. Her cheeks had gone white as her white bodice, her blue eyes were dark with fright. There in full view, tacking up the bay, was the whole British fleet.

I smile now as I think how ceremoniously I put Susie on her horse, how meekly she submitted, Susie who could spring from the ground to the back of any beast, how we turned and raced back ; and I looked with



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longing eyes at the beacon heap. I had neither flint nor tinder.

The miles home seemed interminable, yet not an hour had gone by when the slave was gone hot-foot for the master of the house, and the "Hawk" was skimming the waves Hall-ward.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR preparations were soon made. I had to hurry to the island for our guns and some necessities. When I returned the little *cortége* was ready. Mrs. Rousby had been lifted on a mattress into the big wagon; the carriage, an ox-cart heavily loaded, the slaves and Tom, all awaited me.

At the big gate I whirled my horse mechanically about to close it and had one quick, last look at Rousby Hall which I shall forever remember — the deserted house, the wheat fields, now brown with stubble, running to the water, with woodland and meadow slope on either side — and in that instant there glided into sight a British frigate.

I went pounding on after Tom, calling to him, “The fleet is in full sight in the harbor!”

He pulled his horse so short he sunk back upon his haunches.

"My God!" he swore, and his face was as white as the ruffles of his shirt.

"Tom! Tom!" I cried dismayed.

But he only looked back at me with a face on which despair was writ.

"Barney!"

"The warning!" Fools that we both were, in the moment of excitement and danger we had forgotten our trust.

"I cannot leave them." He looked at the little party ahead. "And Barney will believe it treason."

"Pshaw," I cried, "what nonsense! I will carry the news."

"You!"

"Why not?"

"Your horse —"

"Is one of the best in the stables."

"You cannot leave them," I panted, as we raced along to overtake the rest. "I will turn off at the fork, for the river road. I am far lighter than you. I can ride faster." I was wild for the adventure.

We were nearly at the forks. Down the

woody way inland I could see our little band hurrying on ; the other road, sandy and pine-bordered, curved upward.

“Go to Preston Manor,” Tom commanded. “Tell Preston the British fleet is in the harbor. He passes the warning. Ride for life or death !”

I pulled my hunter sharply to the left ; some words followed me on my way, but I could catch only the sound and not the purport.

How heavy the sand went ! The horse sank to his fetlocks in it and still it stretched on ; how hot the late breathless evening was in the still pines ! How the horse labored and sweat as I urged him through the tiresome sand ! This must be bettered. I stopped at a little brook and let him drink the veriest sip to refresh himself, then I pulled him to the footpath at the road's edge and hastened on. The ground was firmer here ; by and by we got into higher country. We were further away from the river which made a bend to the south, while the road kept straight on. I rode up bold hills and cautiously down slippery slopes of

yellow clay. Oak and hickory and gum, already flame-flecked, lined the way, and threw heavy shadows across the lonely road. I saw no living soul. Partridges with coveys nearly grown whirred up before my way, rabbits went scurrying to cover flicking their flags of truce, deer in the depths of the woods stood a moment at gaze and went trotting away.

We came out again in the sand, toiled through it and past Middleham Chapel, and then I pulled to the left ; I struck a wretched road over which I had been once before, and which was the only way of the river-folk out to church, through thick woods where branches slapped me in the face, and bramble and wild rose crowded close to the roadside ; then the forest grew too dank and dense for undergrowth, paths and wood-roads turned here and there, and I was beset with fear of taking the by-road and losing the way. Once I did so, and floundering, slipping, sliding along the dreariest, ruttiest, steepest hill I ever rode down, I found myself before a wide, deep pond, from which meandered a slender stream.

It was fair enough a sight, the pond gleaming in the fast waning light of sunset, the tinkling stream curving and bending through the moist meadowland that lay between the hills; but my horse was fair bemired in the soft clay at the foot of the hill and there was a wearisome height to climb again, and out to the road once more. The day grew too short for further failings. Another such and night would be upon me in these deep mysterious woods, and Tom's sickening fear might be backed by reason. No! the warning must be given, for the country, for the Commodore, for Marshall.

I hurried on. There on the right was the road to Preston Heights and this winding across the river flats was the way to the Manor. The stars were glimmering when I came out on it, but I could see likewise the glimmering of the candles in Mr. Preston's house.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps on the porch when I came dashing up with the last spurt of speed my horse could give, for alarm dwelt in the air and every blast of it was a fear.

“Who is there?” called the deep voice of Mr. Preston.

“I!” I panted, “from the harbor!”

“What of it?” called a sudden sharp voice, and peering through the dusk I could see the slim lieutenant who had so angered me that day aboard of Barney’s vessel. The sight of him and the cool, insolent tone of his voice, even in his anxiety, made me as calm as he seemed to be. I straightened myself in my saddle and my words were as clear as if I, too, had worn that trapping upon my shoulder which shone on his even in the dusk.

“The British fleet is in the harbor,” I said stiffly. “They had but rounded the Point when I hastened with the warning. You were to send it on,” I addressed myself to Mr. Preston.

“I will take it!” said the lieutenant shortly. “How many sail were there? What is their strength?”

“I know not,” and I felt hot with anger that I did not know, and could have clutched his throat for the exclamation that he made. “They were but in sight, I did not stay to count,” I added sarcastically.

"Ah, and you are sure they entered," he answered in a tone that matched my own.

"They would not have fled from the Hall —"

"Come, young men, come," put in Mr. Preston soothingly. "Dismount," to me, "and rest; you need not ride back before morning."

"You will give me a guide, sir, at once," cried the young officer. "I must know it."

"Know what?"

"Their strength, I must know it. What horses have you in the stable?"

"The best in the country."

"Then must the best be ready for me, instantly, and another for a guide. I know not these bridle paths."

"It was the Commodore's commands," said Mr. Preston with dignity, "that the warning should be at once transmitted."

"I shall be back ere daybreak and be gone at once." He was hurrying to the stables. "See that my boat be in readiness and some one to accompany me!" he called as he ran.

"Joe! Joe!" called Mr. Preston to the

slave who had taken my horse, "saddle the two horses in the stables, go with that young man. Haste, or he will be off by himself!"

In a trice they were gone, negro and man, into the darkness; the sound of the hoof-beats on the road and the wash of the waves on the shore pulsed through the stillness of the summer's night.

Mr. Preston and I were left gazing in each other's faces. "Well, perhaps 't is best," he said after a moment's quiet; and then he fell to questioning me of the swift event of that fateful day. But I had naught to tell. I had said it all at once. "Where has Mr. Rousby taken his family?" he finally asked.

"Mr. Rousby is in Baltimore."

"Ah!" sharply.

"There was most urgent business there. He left the household in Tom's care."

Another exclamation I neither knew the meaning of nor liked. "Where have they gone?"

"To Mrs. Rousby's cousins, up beyond the chapel."

"Ah, a safe enough place, quiet and out

of the way. So Marshall guards the women," he said, after a moment's pause. "'Tis needful, 'tis needful, but so are soldiers."

I ground my teeth with anger, but there was not a word I could say.

"But what am I thinking of? You are tired." He opened the gate quickly to the narrow front yard. All this while we had been standing without where I had dismounted. "You will spend the night with me. An old bachelor is ever glad of company."

His foot on the porch step, the old man turned to give some directions for my comfort to the servants, but I caught him by the arm.

"You will care for the horse," I said. "It is one of Mr. Rousby's hunters. Send it to them if you can, and tell Tom —" I broke off, I could not frame my message. "The lieutenant will need some one to assist him with the boat, he said. I shall accompany him."

CHAPTER XV.

HAVING made my resolve and statement, I would not heed a word of Mr. Preston's urging that I should go comfortably to bed and sleep until I was needed.

"Monkton will not be back till near day-break. Sleep while you can. If you are going with him, you'll need it."

"I am not sleepy, sir," I assured him. I felt I had slept long enough and was at last wide awake.

"Monkton will have to rest, too!"

I knew otherwise. When he returned it would be a flung bridle rein, a short word, and a run for the river and a hoisted sail. I would wait him on the porch with the sleeping dogs.

"You will at least have something to eat? Come, the woman is signalling."

He took me by the arm and led me into the dining room, where a cold meal had been hastily spread at one end of the table. The

candle gleam near my plate showed a red ham cut through its heart, a platter of cold fowl, and white bread and honey, and foaming milk. I did not know I was hungered until I saw the viands. Then I ate until my host beamed with pleasure.

“Ah, youth, youth!” he cried regretfully, and then as if he would not bemoan his old age, “When I was a younger man I struck some good blows for my country.” Had I been anything of a listener he would have told me his tale of Revolutionary deeds, but I was rankly egotistic and saw only the present. Something he said, too, of white hairs and the fire of youth, but his words fell on heedless ears. My own wild resolve beat in my ears and thundered in my veins. It was the only sound I could heed; and seeing this, doubtless, he left me to its voice, for by and by he gave me some directions about the young officer’s boat which lay at the wharf and in which he had sailed to Preston Manor for a friendly visit. And my supper finished, these last words said, he went with slow foot to his chamber.

I flung myself on the bench porch to wait, though I was wild with impatience to be gone. All the languor, all the laziness of the past months, seemed withered, scorched, and burned forever in my wild intent on action. I felt as I lay on the hard bench, my head propped on my arm, my unseeing eyes wide open to the night, as if there were no deed of valor, writ or dreamt of, I could not do or would not. Visions of such things formed and reformed, passed by in gorgeous colorings and came again upon my vision, printed upon the soft dusk of the summer night.

I saw nothing of its shadowy realities, neither the looming shrubbery, nor the gleam of the river, nor the pulsing stars. I heard none of the night sounds, no chirping of katydids, nor soft trickling of dew-drops along the house-roof, nor even the murmur of the tide; but I heard the first beat of the horses' hoofs that pounded along the road to the Manor — heard and heeded.

I sprang to my feet and was for a moment bewildered by the stiff soreness of my limbs.

I had held one rigid posture all those hours. I reached for my gun, which I had leaned against the door-jamb, and then I was by the gate. The dog was barking madly. Mr. Preston, thinly clad, ran out into the porch ; but it was as I knew it would be. The lieutenant flung the rein to the negro. "All right, I have it !" he called, "some one else had eyes. Come on !" He saw a figure in the dusk and guessed it to be some one waiting for him.

"I thank you," he called back to Mr. Preston, who was striving to be heard above the barking of the dogs. "I must be gone ;" and he ran out on the narrow wharf, I after him, and sprang in the boat, tied there at the end.

"Unfasten her. I'll see to the sail. Gad ! the wind sets just right."

"The tide, too !" I called gaily.

"Who's there, I thought — hm ! it's no negro !" he cried, as coming closer, the sail's rope in his hand, he caught the gleam of my face in the dark.

"No," said I, "I am going myself."

"Faith !" still in astonishment.

“To join the Commodore. He will enlist me.”

“That he will, I swear.”

“I am a good sailor,” I added, “better than any of Mr. Preston’s negroes.”

“The very man we want. My dear fellow,” he cried as if he strove to atone for his former intolerance, “I am delighted. We’ll make a man of you. ’T is what such youths as we are made for—war and adventure.”

He flung the sail to her true course, fastened the rope, while I held the tiller.

“My dear fellow,” he repeated, stifling a yawn as he spoke, “you’ve had your rest. I am wearied to death.”

“Lie down in the boat’s bottom, it’s dry enough!”

“Even so, and here’s a pillow for a soldier or a sailor any day.” He rolled his coat under his head. “You can keep her going?” he questioned sleepily.

“Until we find Barney. Where is he?”

“Nottingham!”

“A good sail!”

“We’ll make it!”

“Flood tide —”

“And a strong wind, I’ll warrant, at day-break. I’m confoundedly tired.” He gave a big yawn and by the time his mouth was well shut was sound asleep. So here I sat, my hand upon the tiller, our way set straight up the river. The darkness thickened and paled, a faint light showed across river and land, the sky reddened above the eastward pines, the sun rose in a golden ball and shone full on Monkton, asleep.

“Gad!” he cried, as he roused and raised himself on his elbow and stared first at me and then at the rocking boat, “I was dreaming I was at home. Faith! I’ve had a night of it well-nigh; a few hours will serve a soldier well as ten any time. You must be tired.”

“I? Oh, no!”

“You look fresh as a daisy.”

He opened his ruffled shirt at his neck, rolled up his sleeves, and leaned over the boat’s edge to lave his face and hands.

“And now I feel like one,” he cried, drying them with his handkerchief. “Now I’ll relieve you.”

I stood up and stretched myself carefully for fear of the small craft's rocking.

"Where are we?" I asked.

"I do not know. We made good time?"

"Fairly."

"Then we should be abreast of—I thought so, look there!"

I turned to where he pointed and saw the blackened ruins of a house and outbuildings. The chimneys stood sullen guard in the gray light above the ashes.

"That is Mr. Alvey's," said the young officer. "The British landed there, demanded fifty hogsheads of tobacco—a foraging party from the fleet besieging the Commodore at St. Leonard's Creek," he answered my questionings. "It was all of Mr. Alvey's shipping for the year. They got it, set fire to his house—" He waved his hands; the blackened, deserted ruins told the rest.

"Where is he?" I questioned.

Monkton shrugged his shoulders expressively. "'T is not the only story plainly writ," he said significantly, "but they came no higher. We passed the others in the night."

“But Alvey — I had it of Mr. Preston — had but lately added to his own large household an orphaned babe and two small children — children of a destitute neighbor.”

“And still,” I cried, “men sit still at home.”

“Nay, judge them fairly. A new convert,” he added slyly, “is ever most hot in condemning others.”

The shot was so close I needs must laugh, though I felt myself hot and reddened. “I will follow your example,” I said to hide my confusion, as I threw off my coat and opened my shirt at the neck; and as I was hasty, I got a good mouthful of the water. “Why, it’s nearly fresh!” I cried.

“Far up.”

“’Tis time the fishermen were out,” I said, as I took my seat in the stern where I could best watch the river. “I have been watching ever since dawn.”

“Oh, but you forgot. ’Tis deserted about here.” Still we watched, but the river was deserted. The sun rose higher, the mist floated up from river and shore. We were above the wasted country, and we could

see green fields of corn and white houses gleaming in orchards and level stretches of tobacco acres or shadowy woods. But we dared not land to give any warning. There was no time. We must give our dire news to the first boatman we met and trust him with the rest. We saw one fisherman, it was true, but it was a negro. We thought of the negro regiment and that secret underfear of the slave which beset us all, and we dared not trust him.

Then passing by Marlborough we saw a little fleet of fishing boats. The wind, which had so befriended us, ruffled and roughened the water, and sent the white caps dancing along the current; it was not a morning for good luck to the men who leaned, line in hand, watching the bobbing corks. But they looked content. The freshness of the August day was about them, and beyond gleamed the houses of the town, set in green.

“Hallo! hallo!” I put my hands to my mouth and sent my voice across the water. I watched the man in the boat nearest me turn quickly, “hallo!” and then I said

slowly and insistently, so that each word should carry its full weight, "The British — fleet — is — in — the harbor — coming — this — way !"

I thrilled from head to foot as I shouted it, and yet I could but laugh as I saw the fellow jerk in his line and throw it, a fish dangling at the end, in the boat's bottom, and seize his oars and row frantically landward. Each boat as he passed and hailed it followed; only one made to intercept us.

"Hey, there !" called the man in this as soon as he was near enough to be heard; "how do you know the British are there ?"

"Because we have seen them !" I shouted back.

"How do you know they are coming up the river ?"

"Because Barney is here !" We still skimmed on our way, and the man, plying his oars, followed us. "And they are after *him*. Any jackass might know that."

The man laughed good-naturedly. "They tried to get him before," Monkton bawled, "but they could n't do it. Now they have

gotten the whole fleet — ships from Bermuda and all.”

“What?”

“The fleet, reinforced, is in pursuit.”

“Anything I can do?” called the man.

“Light out with your people; and, yes, give us your snack if you brought it along.”

The man grinned, and, opening a little box fashioned under the seat in the stern of his boat, brought out a package. “Catch it!” he cried to Monkton, who was nearest.

“’Fore the Lord,” cried he gaily, “but here’s luck!” He unwrapped the package of cold corn-pone and ham, and then with just the same look I saw on his face when he asked me to join the service, he called to the man, “Why are you not in the army?”

“There’s none about here to be with,” said the man slowly, and he spoke the truth. In Virginia the militia was well organized, fighting everywhere the small parties landed; in Southern Maryland the British had met little resistance. So near to Washington and the central government, they were so commanded and counter-commanded, so in-

fectured with the indecision there, that men scarce knew what to do.

But Monkton was ready with an answer on the instant. "Come up to Nottingham. I'll show you one," he cried.

"Come on!" I waved him laughingly.

"I'm coming," he said with sudden decision, as he put his boat about. "I'll be there before you!" he called back.

"No, you won't!" I shouted.

"It's nearer by land!"

"No, it is n't!"

"Is it?" I queried anxiously.

"Unless his horse can swim a creek."

"But if he should forestall us?"

"It will be all the same; he knows too little."

"We must beat him!" I vowed.

It was not easy doing it, but we swore we would. The wind died down, the sun grew stifling hot, the tide ran languidly. Soon it would be dead against us.

We stripped to our shirts, tore off our stocks, and opened our shirts wide. The sail flapped idly; we must bend to the oars, which lay in the boat's bottom. What

work it was! I had sailed and rowed for two years for my pleasure; now I rowed for some wild purpose I could not name even to myself, and also because I would not miss a stroke in time to that other oarsman who sat by my side and pulled manfully.

It was noon, high noon and hot, when we came in sight of Barney's fleet lying peacefully before the town of Nottingham, the sides of the barges and the masts of the vessels mirrored in the water, which ran unruffled from bank to bank.

CHAPTER XVI.

I LEANED against the cabin's side, while Monkton was talking eagerly to the Commodore below. The sun glared down on deck and water. There was not a shadow anywhere. The five or six hundred marines packed on barge and schooner panted in the heat. The shine of the metal from the guns was fairly blinding. Canoe and yawl and rowboat at the wharf showed where many had gotten shore-leave and taken refuge from the heat. Not even a breath of wind fanned my cheek and the water lay like glass, inert and shining.

Suddenly I heard the pushing back of chairs, and the Commodore came lightly up the few steps of the companion-way. He had already greeted me heartily when we first clambered aboard. Now he came up to me quickly. Monkton, following, was regarding me with laughter in his eyes.

“Jack,” said the Commodore, “you can ride?”

“Fairly well.”

“Which is more than most of my men can do.”

“I have bestrode a hunter myself, sir,” said Monkton languidly.

“Tut! you know I need you here. He has been begging me —” He broke off suddenly. “You are tired!”

“Not a whit.” I was standing erect, looking him full in his face, giving him gaze for gaze. I knew he wanted something of me, and I wanted to know its nature.

“You have ridden, how many miles was it? and sailed or rowed forty more.”

“I have never thought sailing hard work.”

“There spoke a tar!”

“I should like to be one of yours.”

“And that you shall, I swear!”

“I have come to enlist in the marines,” I insisted. Monkton turned away to hide his smile.

“For any duty?”

“Any.”

“At any moment?”

“Now.”

“The very stuff we want! Think you you can start now with despatches for the Commander-in-chief?”

“Winder?”

“Who else!”

“Where is he?”

“At the Woodyard.”

I looked toward Monkton, who answered the question of my eyes. “Fifteen miles, about,” he answered.

“Where can I get a horse?”

“At the village there.”

I held out my hand. “Give me the despatches.”

“Heard you ever better?” called the Commodore delightedly. “But man, I’m not sending you off without food.”

“I can get something to eat in the village, while I wait for the horse.”

“You need some rest.”

“Good-bye,” said I in reply.

“Here, leave your gun, you’ll not need it; it will make your riding heavy. Monkton will keep it, and when you come to

reclaim it I'll give you" — he paused to give his words full weight — "I will make you an officer in my command."

"And I shall add to it, with the Commadore's permission, the uniform I wore when I held such rank," said Monkton laughingly. Barney must have already told him his intention.

"Here are the despatches. This order at the village tavern will procure you a horse." The Commadore took an open letter from his pocket. "Monkton, here, has been begging for the service, but I need him, and then he must suggest you. Is this correct?"

I blushed hotly and looked at Monkton, but he would not meet my gaze. I glanced, perforce, down the open sheet I held in my hand, and this was what I read:

NOTTINGHAM, August 19, 1814.

Two of my officers have this moment arrived from the mouth of the Patuxent and bring the enclosed account. I hasten to forward it to you. The Admiral said he would dine in Washington on Sunday, after having destroyed the flotilla.

JOSHUA BARNEY.

One 80 or 90 gun ship, flag at main.

Four 74 gun ships, one flag at mizzen.

Six frigates.

Ten ships, about 32 guns.

Five small ships.

Two brigs.

One large schooner, 16 guns.

Thirteen large bay craft.

A large number of small boats are now under way standing up the Patuxent, with a determination to go to the city of Washington; so they said yesterday.

Monkton was a good scout. I handed the Commodore back the report. "Keep it! stay!" He went hurriedly back to the cabin.

"Where did you learn it all?" I whispered.

"I told you I met some one who had eyes and ears," he whispered back, grinning at my surprise.

"Here!" The Commodore was by my side, the letter which he had sealed in his hand. "And remember, you are to return with his answer at once."

"I may see him ashore, sir?"

The Commodore gave his assent, and bade me a cheery good-bye, as we hastened to the boat we had left at the vessel's side.

I saw many strange faces looking down at us curiously as we rowed swiftly by the flotilla, and once there was a shout. I looked up to see my old friend the Captain watching us, agape with astonishment, but I could only call back his greeting.

As I sprang on the wharf, Monkton called :
"See that you win your uniform !"

I waved my hand as I ran clattering along the worn planking of the wharf. Already I saw the shining of my brass buttons and the gleam of my epaulettes.

About the inn the marines ashore were loitering idly. They looked up astonished at my hasty entrance, but I had no message for them or any others, only my order to the host. "See that the horse be gotten ready instantly !" I demanded, "and get me some cold food. No ! something I can eat in my fingers here where I am standing."

"The dinner is but lately finished, if there is aught on the table." I saw the dining room to the left, went in hastily,

and picked up some cold fowl and bread, but by the time I had taken my first bite I heard the quick hoof-beats of my steed. The sailors burst into laughter as I ran past them, the food clutched in one hand, and sprang upon his back.

“All right, my fine fellows,” thought I, “laugh away!” As for me, I cared for nothing save my adventure; for there is one thing youth does — be it to advantage or disadvantage, it pursues one end with fervid energy, blind to all else. The town to me was but a blur of glaring streets and tree-shadowed cottages, and then running straight and white and hot, the road.

Along it I fled, urging my horse to the utmost. When he should be spent I resolved to press another and yet another to my service, so that I might keep to the topmost speed.

“Better we should use them than they fall into hands of the enemy,” had said the Commodore.

“It is rumored they have seven hundred aboard their convoys,” Monkton had added,

and I resolved to get what good was possible out of those I found.

Down sandy stretches and clayey hills, across stream and marsh and up hill again we raced. So far I had gotten my course straight from the village; but when I paused at a forked road in the pine wood wondering which way was mine, I waited for a traveller I heard speeding down the way. When I saw him I rose in my stirrup and shouted. It was the fisherman on his way to Nottingham.

He set me aright and on again I went, but more slowly. The horse was fresh from pasture and was soft; the lather was white upon his flanks, and his breathing came hard. I began to look anxiously for some house near the roadside, as I dreaded the loss of time down the long lanes and back again.

Never could there have been a country more unprepared for war than that through which I rode. The long fields of Indian corn rustled in the high winds, their yellowing tassels tossing to and fro, or the green leaves of the tobacco plant waved over acre

after acre. At the first house I found near enough to the roadside for my purpose the people had heard some rumor from the fisherman or some one he had met.

"Are the British in the river?" was the cry that met me.

The Commodore had said nothing to me as to my keeping silence, and I had met none that hot summer's afternoon, still I scarce knew whether to proclaim my news or not.

"They are," I said briefly.

"There! how long?"

"They are coming up the river. Hold!" for at that they turned and were making off, every one of them.

"I need a horse —"

"Help yourself!" waving to the pasture.

"You must care for this!" I spoke to deaf ears. Far from the river as they were, such fear had permeated all this Southern peninsula from the tale of the deeds along the Potomac that no thought was left to this household save flight. Men, women, and children, slaves and cattle, they would take to the woods. I pressed a negro into ser-

vice, and made him help me catch a beast and fasten my saddle on it.

“Look after this till I return,” I bade him.

“Lord, massah!” he answered, “we’s gwine dribe ebery one o’ dem down to de woods fo’ night.”

“Leave this one here! I’ll get him and turn the one loose I’ve taken.”

But it was a sorry beast I had caught. His gait jolted me sorely and there was no speed in him. There was a handsome large house a mile or two down the road, and I resolved to change. I had to tell the planter the cause of my haste. He was a fine, florid old man and heard me half scornfully.

“The British march on Washington! Pooh! they would not dare. There is a horse at your disposal, certainly. Despatches to the Commander-in-chief?” He paused on the stately steps of his handsome house and looked me over keenly. “Hm! a wise general he has shown himself. Obstacles—” to some murmur of mine, “obstacles are to be overcome! If Washington

should have thought of obstacles — ” Here was another hero of the Revolution, and I was fuming to be gone.

“ Here is your mount, sir, a better I take it than that ! ” and I left him eying his poor neighbor’s steed disdainfully.

But the mount he gave me was well worth praise. He bore me bravely to camp, though I was so wearied I was ready to tumble from the saddle when I got there ; and having delivered the despatches, my one thought was for rest. I was going back as soon as I had stretched and eased my limbs. The answer would be ready in an hour. I am sure it was ready on the instant, and the “ hour ” was simply grace to me and my steed.

In the hour, then, we were gone — fading daylight, dusk, and darkness now. I rode down to the poor neighbor’s field, turned in the beast who had served me so well, trusting to luck to take him home some way, caught my horse I had gotten at Nottingham and blessed the instinct that guided him swiftly home while I nodded in the saddle.

But when I tumbled into a rowboat at Nottingham wharf and pulled out to the flotilla, looming vague and immense upon the river running dark under the starlight, I was wide awake and tingling with nervous excitement. The twinkling light on barge and schooner shone fairy-like, the watches at the vessels' sides called out as I rowed past them, but I called back "Despatches for the Commodore!" and hastened on. He and Monkton, awaiting me, had heard the calls and answers, and were at his vessel's side; and his "Well done!" and his hand clasp were guerdon for any deed.

"I shall return your gun," said Monkton laughingly, "it is in the cabin!"

We followed the Commodore, who had seated himself hastily at the table, pulled the candle nearer him, and broken the seal of his letter. There were only a few lines, but he laid it down heavily and sank his head upon his hands. Monkton and I shrank back from the circle of the candle light.

Barney pulled the letter towards him again, as if to confirm its ill tidings, and

his face settled into stern lines as he read again.

“What is it, sir?” ventured Monkton, who was devotedly attached to him and was treated with much freedom.

“I must land my men,” said the Commodore bitterly, “and march towards Washington the instant I have news of the enemy’s landing. The flotilla must be driven into shoal water and blown up.” The most senseless order of the many senseless ones of that month! The one foe the British feared must be destroyed, removed from their path.

“Well,” he repeated, as he rose to his feet unsteadily, “so be it!”

He made for the stair, but touched me as he went. “Ah!” he said slowly, “Jack!” and then with all the warm geniality of his manner, “You’ve earned your title, sir!” Earned it, I knew even then it was but his warm heart prompted him. “We’ll see service even if it is land service, and we’ll show them how our sailors can fight ashore when that day comes. See that you do your part, lad, though I doubt it not, I

doubt it not. I told you from the first — ” and so talking we went up on the deck, and we heard no further words save of good-will and cheer from him that night. But long after I was supposed to have been sleeping, and should have been were I not wrestling with the nervousness of my great fatigue, I heard him pacing to and fro on the deck, keeping a bitter watch.

Destroy his boats! It had taken a winter's work to fit them; on his first cruise he found they needed yet more work upon them, and had put back to Baltimore again, and then had had but two months' successful command over them. Now they must be destroyed!

CHAPTER XVII.

THREE days later we were at Bladensburg. We had landed on the twenty-first, marched and counter-marched for two days, had been stifled with dust and blistered with heat, and had heard the distant booming that told the destruction of our fleet. The night before we had camped near Washington where the General was for stranding us.

All rumors were rife and the country was in a very panic of mad fear. The enemy marched, we heard, this way, then that; but by the morning of the twenty-fourth all agreed he marched for Washington. The Commodore and his men were posted to guard one way and blow up the bridge if needful, and at Bladensburg, some six miles away on the post road, the soldiers from Baltimore stood guard.

In the mad whirl of that morning we stood passive. Fugitives rushed past us,

men with their families fleeing from the city, carriages and carts and men afoot, volunteer soldiers racing down the road to Bladensburg, all Winder's force—and we were stranded here.

The President and some of his cabinet came hurrying by. Barney on his great bay horse forced himself close up to them. "Is it true the enemy march by the road to Bladensburg?" he demanded.

One of the party assented.

"Then why should I be left here with five hundred of the best fighting men to do what any damned corporal with five could do? I have your consent to move on?" he demanded, as there was no answer.

It was given curtly.

"Deploy there, to the right! Fours forward, march!"

The cheer we gave could be heard in the streets of Washington. Before we were in sight of Bladensburg we heard the volleying of loud, sharp firing—the fight was on. Barney, reconnoitring before us, came thundering back. "Forward on a run!" he cried, and the command ran along the line.

"Halt!" We were on the post road and, looking down, could see the hills, the river, the village, and the fight. Our guns were in the middle of the highway, part of our men there and part to the right. I was on the right. I had donned my uniform before we landed, and been inordinately proud of it. By the end of the first day I was worn out with the duties it meant and my consequent endeavors to find them out and keep them up. By the end of the second day I was so dustied and grimed I had not even a thought of it, and now I was so eager for the fight I had forgotten even myself.

I dashed my arm across my face to wipe off the sweat so that I could see. Barney had dismounted and was himself pointing the guns. Down at the foot of the hills was a narrow bridge. A stream of redcoats was crossing it. There was a sharp fight with some of our men in a fringe of willows, but they were driven back; the redcoats followed, shouting. But now it was our men pushing them back, and the guns of the Baltimore artillery, opening on the bridge,

strewn it with dead and dying. This in the space of a few minutes; the battle was not up to us, nor had we had time for readiness. The men were panting from their run. Barney, the guns pointed, sprang back upon his horse.

“Where is the Commodore, the Commodore?” a man called, running by us.

I was in the first rank. “There!” I cried.

He whirled, gave me a lightning glance, and ran off. In a second he was back to me. “Jack!” he called quickly.

“Rob!” It was all I could gasp. There was a sharp command. The British had rushed again across the bridge, forced the line; the fight was up to us. Barney’s guns swept the road with terrible force. I heard the voice of Captain Miller, who commanded our division. The men about me were taking aim; I did likewise. I fired when they fired, reloaded, fired again. I heard cries to right and left, but had no time to turn that way. Rockets were booming and bursting on the left; I scarce heeded them. We were closer in the press

to our Commodore. "My God!" he cried, "they are in full retreat."

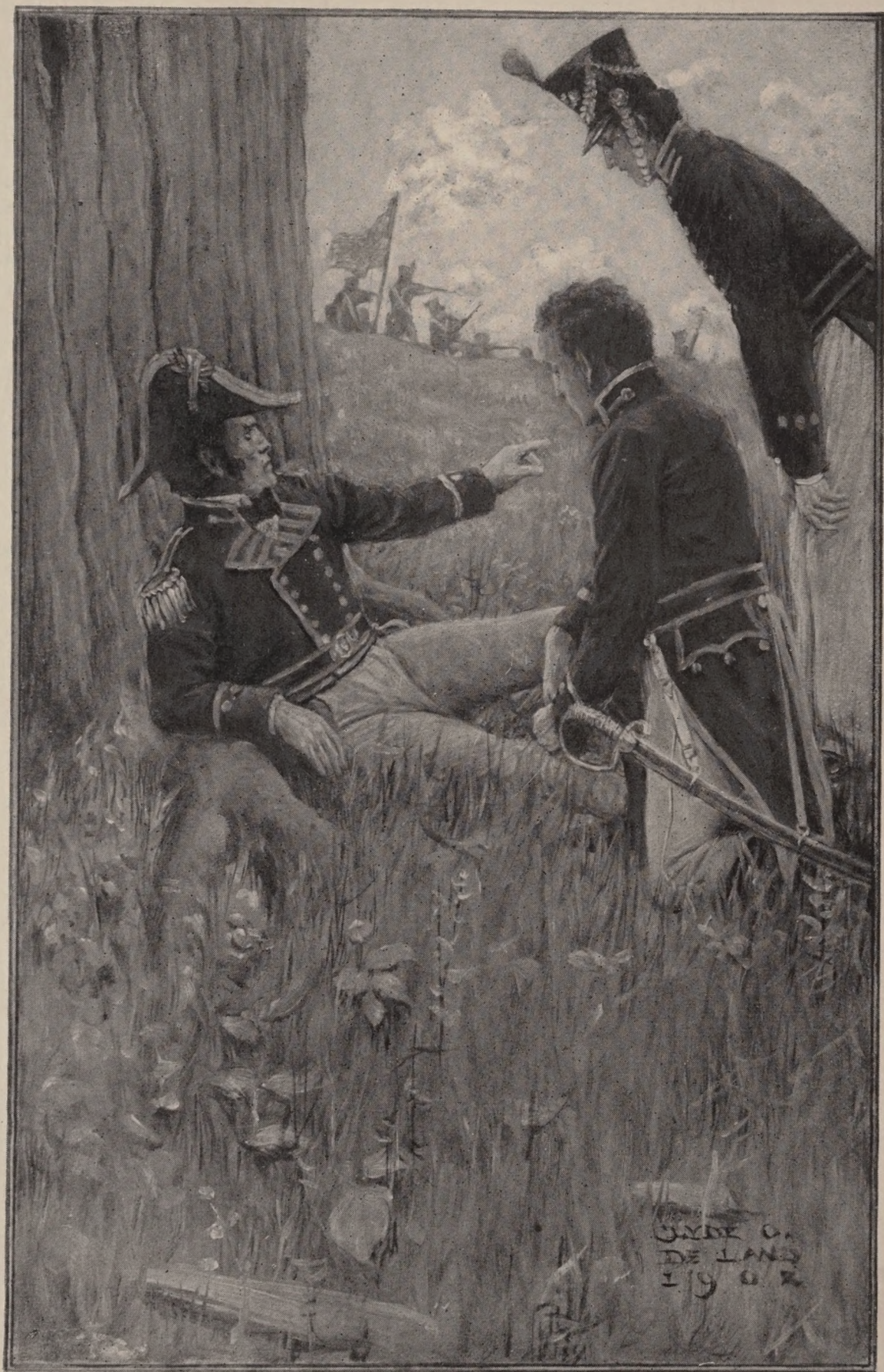
"Who?" I demanded of Monkton, who was near him.

"The militia — the whole field."

"Close up!" thundered the Commodore.

Our guns were at it, sweeping down the road by which the enemy came. They deployed to the left across the field where our forces had been. The Commodore immediately ordered an attack by our force, and we drove them before us across a ravine between the rolling hills. Then we came back to our guns.

A bullet whizzed by my cheek across my shoulder. I whirled in wonder. On a hillside above us I caught a gleam of scarlet. A small force stationed there was being driven out; that was the last of the Americans on the field, all the rest were in full flight. I pressed close to the Commodore, he must know. Just as I reached him a bullet, singing from behind us, dropped his horse; he sprang from him as he fell. A bullet struck him in the thigh. Monkton and I caught him. The Captain, my old



friend, and some other officers closed about us. "Give — the — order — to — retreat!" the Commodore gasped.

We were already in retreating order. Even with one of us on either side, we felt him staggering. The Captain and one of the others put their hands under his limbs and strove to lift him up and carry him thus, but the blood gushed out violently.

"Lay me down, gentlemen, and leave me."

Not one of us heeded him.

"Lay me here, under this tree. I can stand it no longer."

We laid him under a great tree. A spring gushed out from a bank a few yards away. I saw the longing in his eyes, and sprang to it and filled my cap — it was all I had.

"If you will, sir," I begged, as I knelt by him. Monkton lifted his head and he drank eagerly. Then he turned his head to see the field. As for us, we stood with our backs toward it. Not one of us had a thought for anything but our wounded commander.

“You must leave me,” he cried, his glance quickening as he looked. “I command it! The British will care for me.”

Some one seized me by the arm. “Come,” they said, panting. The Captain and the other officers moved off slowly. I stood rooted, spite of the urging at my side.

“Monkton!” said the Commadore.

“No, sir, I will not!”

“Jack!”

“I will see to him!” said that voice in my ear, and I felt myself dragged away, blinded with tears, dumb, resentful, struggling, urged on, stumbling across the wounded, looking down upon the faces of the dead and dying, until I was verily mad with awe and fear, and ran and ran faster than the voice there at my elbow urging me on. I knew it now, it was Rob; where he had come from or how I had not even a thought of as we ran.

A riderless horse swept by us; Rob caught at him, he sprang aside. I caught the strands of his flowing mane. Rob had him. He sprang astride, I behind him; one arm around him, we made for

the woods. I took one lightning look back at wounded men and dying men and fleeing men, and then we were dashing under the trees and crashing through the undergrowth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROB!" I cried a half-hour later, "stop!" We were alone in the heart of the forest. The beast stumbled sadly. I slid from his back and threw myself face downwards on the dank mould.

"Come, lad." How the word went through me, it was Rob's old term; and then as if to turn my thoughts to things near at hand, "There is a spring hard by. I swear I'm half dead of thirst!"

He leaned over and tried to turn my face upward. "Leave me alone," I demanded stubbornly.

"All right!" he called back cheerily as he went, taking me at my word. "I'll call you when I find the water!" And he walked away, the horse stumbling after him.

As for me, no words could tell my bitterness. I had not even thought of failure or defeat, and one so ignominious as this had

been past belief ; and then of myself, my wild panic, my thought of nothing the last half-hour but safety, my own safety, nothing, no one else — I buried my face deeper in the mould, and man as I had begun to feel myself, shook with the great tearless sobs that seem to tear one asunder. The wild excitement and exhilaration and ambition that had gone like wine to my head fell away from me, turned to the lees of drunkenness. I was as one who wakens suddenly from a gay debauch to find his heart like lead within him and the taste of ashes on his lips.

We had lost ; the capital of our country lay at the enemy's mercy. The President and his cabinet were in full flight, and our Commodore lay desperately wounded. The sight of him as he fell, the look of his face, the wild cries of anguish, the shouting of the marines, the bullets whizzing and snapping about us, were burned in my brain and scorched upon my eyes. Shut them tight and turn my face close to the mould of many winters and summers, I could see naught else.

The anguish of those moments hardened me as nothing else could have done. I felt unutterably older as I turned my head upon my arm. Shadow and sunlight flickered down from the green screen overhead upon the forest depths. A hare upon her form not far away was watching me with great liquid eyes, a doe and her fawn trotted into sight and went leaping away; and I was aware, by and by, that the evening wind was singing softly in the treetops and that the sky above was blue. Rob had called me once, twice. When I heard his voice again I got to my feet.

I followed the sound of his call and found him in a little ravine between the wooded hills, from which the spring gushed out and went trickling away in the shadowed forest depths. He sat hunched up, his moody eyes watching the brooklet's flow. He gave me one sharp glance and then looked the other way.

I think the shame we felt, both of us, was the keenest we ever knew, when I threw myself on the damp earth by his side.

There was a great furrow down Rob's forehead and his eyes were bloodshot. I asked the only question that came to me after a heavy silence.

"How did you find me?"

"I knew where you were. I had been fighting with your men. When they broke, every man of them, at the very first — Lord knows I'm not a soldier, I can drive a horse or — I can fire a gun, too."

"I did not know you were a soldier," I said wearily.

"I enlisted two months ago," he answered curtly. "When they were racing every man of them, anywhere, off the field, I threw myself in with your men. When you began your retreat," he added after a while, "I was close to you. I saw the Commodore when he was struck. I followed when you tried to bear him off the field."

This was all we had to talk of, and the silence fell heavily upon us once more.

By and by Rob burst out, "It was the rockets!"

"Rockets!" He sat up erect. Any-

thing was better than this awful, sickening stillness.

“You could not see our position,” he began briskly. “There was the village on the other side the river, we were on the hills this side. We got there the night before. We were worn out. There was a false alarm in the night. We stood under arms two hours. When day did come we had nothing to eat but musty flour and salt beef. Then they came straggling in, the others. We were about eight hundred, the regiments from Baltimore.” Rob went on with more animation, as if it were a relief to pour out his grievance in talk.

“In the morning two regiments of the Maryland militia arrived, some seven hundred men; they had marched sixteen miles to reach us, then some two hundred and forty men from the country about. Later in the day the soldiers from Washington. The county militia was over here in the corner between the Washington turnpike and the one from Georgetown — that’s where the trouble began.

“You should have seen the deadly quiet

of the village and the road beyond. Not a leaf stirring down there in the willow thicket, the river running stilly, shimmers of heat over the village and fields. Our eyes strained on the road there down the hill. I kept thinking how I'd like to come, horses prancing, bells jingling, and maybe a horn — how the sound of it would have echoed! — a horn to my lips, blowing a rattling tune to wake up the folks at the inn; but faith, it was a different tune we heard.

“It was noon when they came in sight, and when they got the range of us and their rockets were bursting around us the horses were unmanageable, the militia broke, that began it — you saw the rest.”

But as for my seeing, I had not a distinct memory of anything but firing and loading, hearing commands and obeying them, then those last moments around Barney, and flight.

Where was the broken army? Where were the flotilla men, the regiments from Baltimore, the militia? It seemed impossible we should be shut away from them all as if we were in the heart of the world

alone ; yet so we might have been, and the evening closed about us, as we lay there exhausted.

The dusk thickened to black darkness under the great trees ; an owl began to hoot close at hand. I felt I should cry aloud. I could not stand it.

“ You have a tinder-box ? ” I asked Rob.

“ Yes.”

I fumbled about feeling for the fagots, strewn thickly around. “ Here, start a light ! ”

“ Zounds, that looks cheery ! ”

“ See if we can find some dead branches.”

“ By the cart load ! ”

We built a fire up in the little dell, where it could do no damage.

“ It’s too hot to sit near it ! ” I exclaimed, as the red embers began to give out heat.

We put the stream between it and us.

“ It puts heart in one ! ” cried Rob with something of the old-time ring in his voice. “ Zounds ! there’s no use to mope like owls.”

“ We’ll never find our way out to-night,” I said.

“ Mope like owls,” repeated Rob. “ Lord, there’ll be another fight and we’ll live to see it.”

“ Another fight!” I had already thought all things done.

“ Hm, the hottest yet!”

“ Where?” I cried, with the first rebound of feeling I had felt.

“ Baltimore!”

“ You think —”

“ Pshaw! I know. They hate us worse than the devil.” Rob chuckled at the thought. “ What do you think they call us? I heard it at the tavern — ‘ a nest of privateers,’ and ‘ the great despository of the hostile spirit of the United States against England;’ there are long words for you.

“ The next blow will be struck there!” he added in quick, brisk tones. “ We’ll find our way out to-morrow,” he said after a while. “ We’ll hasten there at once.”

But I got up to trim the fire; I had other thoughts. The vision of what I would do had formed in my mind, crystallized on the instant. I was going for Tom somehow, and together we would go to Baltimore’s

defence. This was his chance and mine. I felt quite calm, even cheerful, now I saw a future and deeds to be done in it. I fixed the fire, roamed about for more wood and came back to Rob's side. The talk of Baltimore had set me thinking of the days I spent there, the Golden Horse tavern, the meeting-house.

"Rob," I said quickly, as the idea flashed through my mind, "I thought you a Quaker."

"They will have none of me," he answered soberly.

"Why?" asked I in astonishment, remembering their old friendliness.

"Because I enlisted!"

"Pshaw! And Ruth?"

"We quarrelled that very day. I have n't seen her since," he added, his eyes fixed gloomily on the leaping flames. I knew what he saw there. I saw it, too — a summer's stillness brooding over the silent gathering in the wide, high-ceilinged meeting-house, thoughtful faces on either side, men or women, and amidst the women a slender form, gray clad, gray bonneted, a

clear pink cheek and drooping lashes just showing between the bonnet's sides.

I could not comfort him, but I slipped closer along the ground, so that I could put my hand on his knee; and that was all we said that night until I told him I was dead for sleep. We both slept the heavy sleep of the exhausted there in the little dell, the fire dying lower and lower, the brooklet singing louder and louder, and far, very far overhead the gleam of a star between the gently tossing branches.

CHAPTER XIX.

I WAS a better woodsman than Rob, and then, moreover, he would listen to my advice even when, a heartsick boy, I came with him on the long journey from Boston. So now when I said, "Suppose we follow the stream," he was willing to heed me.

It was gray dawn here in the woods, and while we were refreshed by sleep, we were so hungered we felt we must find civilization soon. I went ahead, following the broadening stream, and Rob followed with the bridle of the horse, hobbling near us in the night, over his arm. When the daylight brightened, our feet were in lush grass, and here and there the cardinal flower showed scarlet in the green ; but after a bit the way grew wild and tangled.

"Rob," I declared, as we paused at the edge of a tangle of dogwood and blackberry vines and bramble, "I am afraid this is the wrong way out."

Before he could answer me, the horse behind him raised his head, sniffed the air eagerly, and neighed loudly. A neigh answered him, another and another.

Rob threw back his curly head and laughed. "This way!" he called, as he began to break his way through the undergrowth. There, hobbled in a little glade, were some six or seven horses.

"Some poor fellow has hidden 'em well," he cried, "grass and running water and a way no one could find. Help yourself."

I stood for a moment, not knowing what he meant. Then I laughed aloud as I untied the withes from the foot of a slim gray mare and sprang astride of her. There was a rutty, faintly marked way hither, and following this we came to a little used wood road; the rest was easy. In an hour we came out upon a broad highway, and, after some hard riding, upon a turnpike road.

"This is the post road," Rob declared. "Some ten miles further, if I remember aright, lies the Stag Inn — a tavern, lad, think of it! Come on!"

I rode on by his side thoughtfully. I was

trying to untangle the memory of some description of the roads hereabouts. "At a big pine standing alone at the edge of the woods a road forks off, running down to the peninsula! At a big pine!" What was that great tree lifting its branches ahead? And here a narrow ribbon of a road branched off. At its mouth I drew rein. "Rob," I said firmly, "I'm going down for Marshall."

"What, the —" Rob shut his lips firmly.

"Will you wait for us at the Stag Inn?"

"No!" he blazed.

"We would be there to-morrow night."

"If he would come!" scornfully.

"He is coming."

Rob looked at me for a second keenly.

"Well, maybe you can bring him. You are getting a way about you, lad."

"A way?"

"A way of having your way." He laughed shortly.

"Where will you wait for me, then?" My horse was restive at the restraint, and snorting and kicking viciously at the flies on her haunches, and talking was not easy.

"At the Golden Horse."

“So be it. I’ll join you there.”

“If you are not going on a fool’s errand. Come, lad, Baltimore is not so far away.”

“No. I left him before; he did not know —”

“You did?” Rob understood at once, no need to finish the sentence. I told him briefly what else there was to tell him of my adventure.

“Well! well!” he said, “perhaps ’t is best. I’ll look out for you. Mind you come anyhow, *anyhow!*” he was calling after me, for my horse was already springing along the narrow dirt road.

As we went on, and as the heat of the day waxed stronger, there was something stifling in it. The way was solitary. Not a house did we pass; now and then a road opened in the woods, but I knew not if it led to any habitation, and hungered as I was, I must keep to the highway. Although the sun shone hot and glaring, the atmosphere was thick and yellowish. The horse was a foam of lather, and the sweat rolled down my face. I rolled up my coat and put it behind me. I loosened my shirt.

The horse would go scarcely out of a walk. When we struck the woodland the leaves hung motionless, their silvery sides upturned; there was not a call of the birds, nor hum of insect life, nor any living beast to cross our pathway.

Thicker and thicker grew the air. The fields when we came out of the woodland seemed shut in with yellowish pall, that thickened and narrowed the line of vision, until I was near to a hut by the roadside before I had seen it. Door and window were close shut, but I opened the little gate and went in, leading my horse. Water we needed worst of all, and when I glimpsed the curb of a well and its long sweep behind the hut, I dropped the bridle and ran. I swung up the sweep and drew the dripping bucket up and drank and drank, the horse whinnying at my side, and then I held it fast as she thrust her gray nozzle in and drank, while I rubbed her head with my cool wet hand.

"There," I cried, pulling her away, "enough!" As I turned I noticed the yellow thickness had changed to gray, dark

well-nigh as night. Chickens were running with ruffled feathers and quick sidelong glances to roost; the horse kept close to my side. It was evident that a summer storm, severe beyond the wont of such, was close upon us, and that it would be foolish to push on.

There was a little shelter of saplings and boughs with a low door big enough for a cow, and a smaller one, sod-thatched, for fowls; but there was no place of refuge for the horse, and I did not like to leave her, hot and lathered as she was, to the storm.

“I must tie you here,” I said aloud, as I led her under a rough shelter at the back of the hut and fastened her to the post.

For me the door yielded readily; there was a latch-string inside which by manœuvring I got hold of, and so within. It must have been the hut of some free negro who knew how to live comfortably, but who had gone off in sudden fear, warned maybe by some story from a frightened militia-man riding homeward.

A little table near the window was set

with wooden plate and mug, a skillet on the hearth held a brown corn-pone unbroken, and hanging from a string before the hearth was a bird done to a turn.

I sprang toward it quick as a hound would, but before I had devoured it the room was dark as night and the lightning was snapping outside and licking along the skillet on the hearth. Then the crash of the wind was all about us; a tree across the road was whipped to pieces, the rails of the worm-fence were whirled through the air, the chimney-sticks and mud were clattering against the sides of the hut and down the gaping hole of the hearth, and in the pauses of the wind I could hear the horse whinnying in terror and straining at the bridle.

I could not lose her. Between the gusts I rushed outside, caught her and dragged her in, and soothed her terror as best I could, though whether we were safer here it would be hard to say. And then the rain came whipping like shot against the cabin's sides. It was dark now as night, except when the lurid glare of the lightning flamed

so vividly one could not see. We could hear the shrieking wind tearing everything before it; the roll of the thunder was like the cannonade of yesterday, and the torrents of rain were washing about the hut outside and running down the hole where the chimney should have been in ashy streams to our feet.

It looked as if I had escaped the battle-field but to meet death in this obscure corner. The horse lunging with terror at the lightning's flash, the danger of the thunderbolt, the tearing of the wind, — twice I felt the hut tremble and thought we were gone, but it settled down to its foundations close upon the earth and that danger passed us by. The lightning, too, passed over us, but the rain came down in torrents. When I dared, at last, to open the door, the place about was all awash. Water ran over the hard, bare earth of the back-yard like a river, a yellow stream raced under the shelter, the timbers of the frail outhouses strewed the ground, and across the rain-covered fields I could see the forest's edge and many a prostrate tree.

It was late, too ; we were housed for the night. The rain ceased at dusk. I led the horse out and tied her under the shelter, and curled myself on the shuck bed, quilt-covered, the only dry spot in the cabin.

So heavy was the road next day, so washed into ravines, so obstructed with trees across the way, that it was late afternoon before I turned into the narrow lane that led to the wood-circled house where Tom and Mrs. Rousby's household had taken refuge.

Here the storm had not been so severe. An up-rooted tree upon the lawn, a fallen chimney-top, marked its way ; the heart of the storm had gone riverward.

I searched the place eagerly for sight of any one as I rode up, but it was deserted. I rode by the yard fence to the stable, and there, standing in the barnyard, was Marshall. He never moved a step to meet me, but stood still, looking cool and calm and scrupulously neat in his well-worn clothes, while I was stained and grimed and hungry ; still, I was as calm as he.

I rode in at the open barnyard gate and to his side, and we looked at each other in steady silence for the space of a second, a furrow deepening on his forehead and a look of steel growing in his blue eyes.

"Tom," said I, with perfect steadiness, "I have come for you."

Now the anger in his face was dying to amazement.

"We are going to Baltimore." I laid my free hand on his sleeve. "The next blow will be struck there!"

"Where learned you such soldiery?" began Tom scornfully.

"At Bladensburg," I answered steadily. "You knew I had gone, Tom," I went on quickly, for I knew this my one chance for quiet speech with him. "You knew I was restive. When I reached Mr. Preston's, Monkton was there. I went with him. I have been with them ever since, till — till our defeat. I was in the thick of it," I went on, "before I knew it, but I'd go again this day. I am going to Baltimore."

"Not if I forbid it," he said sternly.

"You are going with me." In the abso-

lute stillness I was aware of the hot sun and the reek of the stable-yard.

"Tom, you must," I pleaded, "we need you!" How quickly I had identified myself with the defenders.

"But the women," said Tom, speaking slowly.

"Are safe." I waved an impatient hand about me; no enemy was like to find his way to this plantation, remote, wood-girdled.

Still Tom kept his anxious look, and I saw his quick glance at the negro working far back in the stable.

"Leave them to the overseer; he is capable," I insisted.

He drew a long breath. "I must see!" And for the time being I must rest content.

"You need rest," he said, turning to me quickly. "Joe," to the negro in the stable, "take this horse!" We turned away to escape the darkey's fuss at sight of me. "Come to the house."

"Where are the ladies?"

"At their siesta."

"Can I get in without their seeing me?" I asked anxiously. I knew enough of the

sisters' teasing to wish not to meet them in this state.

“Wait!”

Presently he called me. The hall was cool and deserted. He opened a door on the right. “Come in here.”

The scented dusk of the chamber was delicious. “I will find you a snack,” said Marshall, as he went out, closing the door softly behind him. I tiptoed about, for the house was so still I feared to make the slightest noise.

Marshall came with the food he had been able to find quickly, and we whispered and jested as I ate it greedily, as we were wont to do at home. I told him of my adventures and I noticed how grave he grew. I began to see then that it was as high a bravery to be still and keep to the thing one felt his duty as to be ever in the thick and press, for he said quite gently, “Ah, Jack, I envy you!” And then again, “It is hard, sometimes, to do what seems the best to do.” So that I felt when I tumbled into bed as he bade me there was no jar between us.

“His duty.” I felt I knew it fully and should so persuade him.

Meanwhile the scent of lavendered sheets stole on my senses; the perfume of roses, yielding their sweetness to the sun, stole through the shuttered blinds; the white curtains wavered in the faint breeze that reached them; the wind in the chimney mouth was just loud enough to wake the echoes and strong enough to set the asparagus boughs heaped in the hearth a-waving. I was asleep.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN I woke it was dark in the room. I thought it the beginning of night-fall and was about to spring from my bed when I heard a soft breathing by my side. Some one I guessed to be Marshall was there. I stole softly to the window and opened it; it was dawn. The cows were lowing in the milking lot and the milkers with noggins on their heads were hastening to them. The grass was wet with the thick dew of August, and the roses beneath my window hung, their clusters heavy with dampness.

A sound from the bed startled me, and when I turned there was Marshall laughing at me.

“Faith, you made a night of it.”

“Why did n’t you wake me?”

“You slept like a log; it would have been cruelty.”

I stretched myself lazily, a most delicious sense of well-being running through my veins.

“Where are my clothes?”

“Put your head out the window there and call Joe; he is somewhere about.”

“Yas, sir! yas, sir!” said Joe, as he came in answer to the call; “hyar dey is, an dey suttently is fine!”

Tom had bade him put my clothes in order, and he had brushed them to the highest state of cleanliness and polished every button to shining brightness. When I got into them and surveyed myself in the swinging mirror above the mahogany drawers I felt a thrill of satisfaction. I was tall beyond my years and slender; still, so was Monkton, and the clothes fitted to perfection. My face, tanned and healthily flushed, had a look on it new even to myself, that I know now to have come from the decision gained by looking great issues squarely in the face and choosing firmly one's way; and the thatch of hair I strove to brush into order on my head was as thick as Tom's and as dark as Rob's. For the first time I had no fear of meeting the sisters.

So sure was I of myself and of Marshall, and so blithe my mood, I had not even a word of argument as we dressed, and when Tom told me his plans, I was not a whit surprised. "I hear that Alvey" — I remembered the ruins of his house — "has taken refuge with his family a few miles hence. His boys are stout, good lads, and could I get one of them to stay with the overseer —"

"The very idea!"

"I'm going at once."

"Shall I go with you?"

"Zounds! have you not had enough hard riding?"

"But to stay here —"

"And entertain the ladies —"

"Pshaw!"

"You look the ladies' man to perfection."

At which I turned hot and had not a word to answer.

"Say not a word of my errand," cautioned Tom, as we went out into the hall.

I need have felt no shyness, the sisters were the perfection of kindness. Tom away, they must hear and question of every

day of my absence, and I must be bidden to Mrs. Rousby's bedside to tell again as much of it as I would.

Mistress Bess was by my side as we came out of her mother's room.

"I have not seen mother so interested since we came here," she said thoughtfully. "I think sometimes," she added slowly, as we loitered in the hall, "that if she were really roused, her illness has passed away." She went on more hastily. "Her removal here has been really a benefit. She eats enough, sleeps well; I have urged her to get up, rouse herself, but Jane thinks differently, and is for pampering her."

"If Mr. Rousby were here —" I ventured.

"It would be different, but she insists that we send the most cheerful messages the few chances we have had of sending, and so —" she leaned back against the railing of the stair near which we stood, and looked wistfully through the open door into the yard. Somehow I could not help but think there was another anxiety wearing on her, or her face would not have been so thoughtfully sad, for it was a bright

face, though shy, and made for sunshine and laughter.

I remembered her early difference with Marshall and wondered if that were still, somehow, at the root of her discomfort; and as I thought, she gave me an opening I could not turn from.

"You will stay with us now," she said with the air of compelling her thoughts to light themes.

"No," said I, watching her keenly, "I go to Baltimore!"

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"And Tom?" I scarce noted the name, I do not think she did at all.

"Goes with me."

I saw her clutch the rail and go white, but what she said was "Thank God!"

Then I turned traitor to him. "He has gone to find some one to stay with you and the overseer," I said.

"We have been a millstone about him!" she answered bitterly. Still I saw no clearing of her face as I had hoped for, and feeling the time was short and in this crowded

household I might have no such chance again, I took my hesitancy by both hands.

"Is that all?" I said in such a way she needs must know my meaning.

She went from white to red, and I could see the darkening of her eyes and the half laugh, half tremble of her lip. "I have lost the picture he gave me, and I have urged him to different actions," she said haughtily.

"Oh," I cried, "and if the picture be found and Marshall goes to the war?" She drew a long breath and shook her head, but I looked back at her and laughed as I went hurriedly out of the porch to the stable. When I came back past the house I was on horseback. I waved my hand to the sisters on the porch. "I'm going down to the harbor," I called out. I had been possessed all morning by a homesick longing to see it, our island home and the silvery tossings of harbor and bay; with such a purpose as I had at heart, I strove to resist it no longer.

The hurricane that swept the country had cleared the atmosphere of the oppressiveness

which had made action so difficult for the few days before it. The air was like a draught of wine, the wind cool, the sky a great blue arch, clear from rim to rim. There were great pools on the way and torn branches, and in the woods I saw many an up-rooted tree ; but when I got to the Hall all was as we left it, peaceful and beautifully freshened by the rain.

I turned my horse into the yard, and then went down the meadow slope to the water. Our boat lay there, tied where we had left her, but half filled with the water which had swept over her. I bailed her out and put her for the island. Of the many happy, careless moments I had spent there I count that noon among the happiest. I lounged in the cabin — once I had gone straight to the fulfilling of my purpose and gotten the silhouette from its hiding-place where I had carelessly put it and forgotten it long ago — or on the door-sill, or on the bluff. The wild fowls screamed about me ; the waves ran white capped and dashed along the shore, and I listened to them and the singing wind with a joyful heart. I was no

longer a purposeless, dreaming lad ; there were things I had done to stir one's veins in remembering, and things I purposed doing that set one's heart athrill in thinking of.

I looked far up the river, for I knew at any time the sails of the British fleet, their victory won, might be seen setting down that way ; but it was as peaceful as I had seen it on any day, and I was determined, being so far, to cross the harbor and see if there were any tidings of the neighbors there.

As I neared the old farmhouse, I saw it wore the same look of desertion as the Hall. I moored the boat, went up to it, to find it locked and silent ; I went around the house, and to my amazement the kitchen door was opened.

"Harry !" a voice called quickly at the sound of my footsteps, and the voice was Susie's.

I made some mumbled answer, striving to mimic her brother's deep voice.

"Come in here, I'm in the kitchen !" as I kept on.

There on the kitchen floor sat Susie, her back towards me; the light from the open door shone on her fair hair and slim bent figure. I came up behind her, speaking no word.

“We need some onions; mother told me to get those already dried, and peppers.” Her lap was filled with strings of silver and red. “I hate to unfasten the onions.” She was sniffing daintily. “My hands will smell odiously. Here!” She tossed them up to me, and as she glimpsed me she sprang screaming to her feet.

“Hush! hush!” I begged, for her shrieking rang eerily through that empty house. “Susie, you know me?” And, at the first gleam of recognition she gave me, what should that young woman do but close her red lips firmly, and walk away to the chimney seat as if I were her arch-enemy, and she must put that distance between us. I stood for a moment there on the kitchen floor bewildered, onions and peppers strewn at my feet, then I strode across to her and sat myself by her side.

“Did I frighten you?”

She gave me a scornful glance from flashing eyes, but her lips were tremulous for all her high looks.

"I came across. I wanted to know. I have but gotten back," I floundered on, scarce knowing what thread of speech to catch at and so spin my yarn.

"Gotten back!"

There was my clue. I seized it boldly, and spoke as I had never before in all our pranks in that same chimney nook; and I watched the scorn die from her face and change to wonder, and then to something else I gave no name to, even while I heeded. Then at the end of all I added, "And we go to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" and we were both silent. Suddenly at her silence and the look on her face, something sprang up within me I had scarce dared to dream of.

"I am coming back," I said, so low no ear could have heard save that so close to me. "I am coming back some day *for you.*"

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT more I might have said, I know not; at that very instant Henry came rushing in the hall. Far up beyond Point Patience sailed the fleet, making outwards.

I had but time to ask, "Where have you taken refuge?" and Susie to answer, "In the tobacco house, far over near the pine woods," and to say a quick good-bye, and to look long at Susie's red cheek and curling lashes veiling her eyes; if only Henry had not been there by that screen of lilacs about the kitchen door! And then I must be skimming across the harbor.

The wind sang as I flung the sail to it, and we went skimming away, the boat heeled to the side, and the water racing by her prow. I drew in long breaths of the fresh salt air, for I was not a whit afraid, the enemy were too far away; and,

even were they not, the "Hawk" was too insignificant a prey.

I turned a loving look on the wide curves of our bay, and then again to the tawny stretches of our island as we flew past ; but once ashore, there was no time for backward glances. I raced homeward. Tom was there. He had stabled his horse, and was coming out of the barn gate when I rode up.

"Did you find Mr. Alvey?" I queried hastily.

"No."

I sat still on my steed for an instant, dismay at my heart, then I flung myself from the horse and, giving him a sharp cut, turned him into the stable-yard, where a black waited. I hurried after Tom, who had turned house-wards.

"Where was he?" I asked as soon as I overtook him.

"Gone to Baltimore."

"To enlist?"

"Yes!"

"His sons?"

"Have gone likewise."

We were at the lawn gate and I put out my hand as though to open it, but held it obstinately shut as I said to him, "Tom, you will not stay here, for this."

"I have stood as much questioning from you as I purpose to stand," he answered hotly, though he spoke lowly; the porch was not far away and Mistress Bess in her dainty afternoon dress was there, watching us anxiously.

"Better stand it from me than hear hard words from others."

"Who would dare?"

"Many and many a one. This is a free country!" said I, with a tinge of irony in my voice as I recalled the time Tom himself had said the words.

"Stand out of my way!"

"I will not!" If anger could have withered, the blaze of it in his eyes would have scorched me then.

"Mistress Bess —" I began, determined to use even the argument of wishes.

"'Fore God! if you say another word I'll find time and place both to deal with your impudence."

“Tom,” said I steadily, “this is not ‘time and place’ for anger. Think! if you are undecided still, if you linger now, what will your own conscience say to you hereafter?”

A half-stifled exclamation was my only answer, but the heat of his anger was over.

“We must go, both of us, on the morrow,” I went on firmly, as I opened the gate and he hurried past me.

That night I could not sleep. I had found Mistress Bess had given up her chamber for my luxurious rest the night before, and we would have no such sacrifice again. Tom slept, as he had been doing, on a sofa in the hall; I, on a pallet by his side. I was intolerably restless. Either I had slept too much the night before or lived too much that day.

I took my quilt and pillow to the porch side, but there the teeming farm life was too close. The fowls were restless on their roost in a tree near by, and a horse grazing not far away made a noise loud as machinery. So I tossed from side to side, looked up at

the stars shining luminously clear, and by and by was aware of a red light showing low above the forest. I lay and watched it many minutes with but a thought of idle curiosity. Then a strange fear shook me. I went back in an eager mental flash along the windings of the road Hall-ward, and then I rose and went softly into the hall and bent over Tom, whispering his name; but he slept soundly. I had to shake him well before I could rouse him, and then he got stumbling to his feet and went bolt into the banister, and I feared the whole household would be awakened. I got one arm about him and steered him to the porch.

“Tom,” I whispered, “look there!”

He made a sleepy exclamation.

“What is that red light over there?”

He rubbed his eyes once more, still sleepily, but was suddenly so wide awake I could feel the twitching and tension of his muscles where I held his arm.

“Do you think it can be —”

“There is no dwelling that way save the Hall. You saw the British —”

“Rounding Point Patience.”

“Then they had time! They found the house deserted!”

“And have rifled the place!”

“Tom,” I whispered, agonized at the thought, “our hut.”

“Tut, they’d never notice it!” and I was thankful for our humbleness.

Tom slipped into the hall and came back with the few pieces of clothes he had taken off, his coat and vest and shoes and stock. His shoes he put on hastily, sitting on the porch’s edge, and with the others on his arm he started off.

“Where are you going?” I questioned, following him.

“To find out!”

I stole back hurriedly and made ready to accompany him; but it was a fruitless errand. A mile away we met an humble neighbor hurrying with the news. The British had landed that afternoon, plundered the Hall, and set it afire at leaving.

When we got back to the house it was near dawn. We freshened our toilette and waited with dread the moment when the news should be told; but when it was

known every feeling was lost in amazement at Mrs. Rousby.

We were on the porch holding sorrowful council, when we heard a light step along the hall, and there in the doorway she stood, pale, swaying; Mistress Bess at her side, scared and triumphant both. She waved aside with her thin hand every expression of both fear or condolence.

“I have come to tell you,” she said, as she sank into the flag chair I pulled hastily forward, “I have come to tell you — I have heard from my daughters that you wish to go to the defence of Baltimore and have been detained by fears of our safety. Go! Go this very day! What you can do must be done; give us not a thought.”

I had been scared miserably, standing there behind her chair, thinking she would beg that we should not leave her; and not knowing Tom’s humor, I knew not what effect such words would have on him.

“When such outrage is done, every man who will not do his utmost for their defeat is a coward. My husband is in Baltimore. I would not have him here, I would have

no messages to disquiet him. Tell him you left me well. There is the breakfast bell!" as its loud ringing broke in on her speech. "I shall go in with you."

Truth, it came at the right time ; we were all somewhat strained at such heroics.

She got to her feet, I on one side and Mistress Bess on the other, but though she laid a hand on the arm of each she took no help from either ; nor, must I add, did she either suffer any inconvenience or go back to her invalidism. The flame of her anger had cured her.

As we fussed about her chair at the dining table the lace fichu folded about Mistress Bess' neck fell apart when she leaned above her mother, and thrust in its folds was the silhouette I had restored her.

That day we took to the road. That night we slept at Stag Inn, where I affixed a proclamation to the door-post which was the means of restoring the gray mare to her owner, and the next day we were in Baltimore.

We found the country we rode through

afire. The very shame of our defeat had roused men beyond the power of anything else. I do not think another day like that at Bladensburg could have been possible, had we only half the force we had then; there was the desperate feeling, amongst all, of men driven to the wall and nerved to any daring.

So the post road was crowded with wayfarers, militia-men, stray members of regiments, soldiers from Virginia coming by way of our ruined capital, Winder's soldiers, market men with loaded wagons, and, coming out, some few women and children.

We had thought to find the city overflowing. The streets we rode through were quiet to strangeness. We turned the corner toward the tavern. The sign of the Golden Horse swung idly before an empty porch and gaping vacant doors and windows. Up the length of the street there was not a blue wagon in sight, the stream from the pump-trough trickled into the gutter, the maples rustled overhead; it was more than a Sabbath stillness.

"Hallo!" called I, and we heard in answer hasty footsteps echoing through the empty house.

The landlord, recognizing us, came hastily down the steps. "Mr. Marshall, Master Jack, we looked for you yesterday." He hesitated a moment. "Could you take your horses to the stable?" and hurried before us as we pulled the beasts about and made for the gate he opened.

"There was never such a sight seen at the Golden Horse!" he said as we rode into the great yard where hoof nor hide waited sale. "No drover will venture on the road and every horse we own is pressed into service."

"Which way are the people to be found?" asked Tom, as we hurriedly looked to our steeds.

"On Hempstead Hill, mostly."

"You have room for us?"

"Captain Ruxton has seen to it."

"Is he here?" I asked quickly.

"Aye, the old room. Will you go to it?" he asked, as we hurried back and into the house.

The landlord hastened up the broad shallow stair and threw open the door of our old room. "I have to do all myself. Not a soul but the women on the place and they are all day a-cooking. Lord, it seems as if I would buy out the market."

"You can give us a room to ourselves?" asked Tom quickly, seeing the two great beds.

"To yourselves? Zounds, sir, men are sleeping all over the place, hall, office, anywhere. The town is crowded; a bed is not to be had for love or money."

"But favor!" I put in mischievously.

"You have said it, and Captain Ruxton has ever our best."

Tom must be content with his company, and it did me good to see the two come closer together in the days which followed. It did them good, too. Rob was a check on Marshall's haughtiness and he in turn on Rob's carelessness.

But now we must look for Mr. Rousby. All down Market Street the shops were closed or idly open, a listless apprentice on guard. Gadsby's was as deserted as the

Golden Horse. It was too near the noon for shadows. The sun beat mercilessly on us as we hurried on. At the bridge which spanned the Falls I paused a moment to bare my head to the faint wind blowing up the harbor and to wipe the sweat from my face. The shipping was huddled close, like chickens when a hawk is near, schooners, vessels, big and small; and among them was a craft such as I had never seen — big, white, a huge wheel on the side and a black chimney of iron towering from the middle.

“What is it?” I asked curiously.

“That?” Tom cast one look at it. “Oh, that must be the new boat I’ve read of. They use steam for propelling it, and claim it is both safer and faster than wind and tide. I heard they had bought one for the packet line to Frenchtown.”

I, too, had heard of it, and resolved the first moment’s leisure should bring me closer to it, but that moment was farther off than I thought. It was a good three miles to Hempstead Hill, but when we found it, we found where the life of the city had

poured itself. On the unfinished breast-work the men swarmed, those who dug, and those who shovelled the dirt into the carts, and those who drove, and those who directed; but nowhere did we see Mr. Rousby.

“Suppose you go that way,” I suggested, “and I this; we’ll meet here.” We were in everybody’s way; people were running into us and jostling us. Tom gladly assented.

We were on the top of a levelled earth-work as he spoke, and slipping and sliding in the loose dirt I hastened off. A careless step sent me tumbling, and I pulled myself up, to run full tilt into some one coming my way.

“Can you tell me,” I began instantly, “where Mr. Rousby is?”

“Maybe I could.”

It was Mr. Rousby himself, laughing heartily at my discomfiture.

“Well, my own wife would not have known me. How is she?” he added anxiously.

“Better, much better!”

"Then she'll be able to come. I sent for her yesterday."

"Sent for her!"

"I sent a man to bid them drive by easy stages hither."

"We must have passed him. There were many wayfarers," I stammered.

"Where's Marshall?" he demanded quickly.

"Here, looking for you. He went that way; I —"

"Ran into me quickly enough. What is he going to do?"

"Volunteer in one of the regiments."

"I'll see to it."

"Mr. Rousby," I begged earnestly, "you will see he has the most active service. He wished it; he might not say so."

"Hm! there'll be active service enough. What are you — what in the deuce!" He fell back and eyed me from head to foot. "I thought there was something! Where did you get that dress, sir?" tapping me on my epaulettes.

"I fought for it."

"So!" incredulously, whereupon I told

him in few words where I had gotten it and where I had worn it. "I shall join the Flotilla men here," I added.

"They are there to the left." He pointed towards the harbor.

"There is Tom!"

"You left all safe at the Hall?" he asked as we hastened after Marshall. "What!" for I was stammering, and scarcely knew what to say. I had hoped Tom would have the telling. "You left all safe?" he insisted.

"The British —"

"What of it? Man, speak out!"

"The Hall is burned," I said swiftly. He stopped in his tracks, and his ruddy face went white under the grime and powder of clay.

"My grandfather built it," he said slowly at last. "We have dwelt there for three generations. He had the grant from the Proprietor. Marshall"—they greeted each other heartily—"Jack has been telling me my house is gone. Ah, well, we'll make 'em pay for it, sir, we'll make 'em pay for it. And you want to volunteer! I'll man-

age it for you. We're glad of every one, every one. Come and see what we are doing first."

We were on the top of one of the highest earthworks which was already finished, so that we could both see and be out of the way of the swarming workers.

"Here is where we look for the storm. The enemy will land somewhere along the river, and when they march on, sir, they'll meet *this* !"

"This" we could see even in its unfinished state would be a line of fortifications a mile long, with semi-circular batteries here and there for cannon. Behind these, on higher natural sites, several other batteries were being constructed which would command the lower line.

"The battery at the Lazaretto commands that end ; some of Barney's men are there," he said, turning to me. "From there across the neck of the harbor to the fort is a line of sunken ships ; impregnable, sir, absolutely impregnable ! And should they steal around the fort on the river side and strive to make a landing they will meet with a warm

welcome. We have two batteries there, Fort Covington and the City Battery. There are fortifications to the north and west likewise, but here is where the blow will fall. We are safe, sir, safe as a church. I have sent for my wife and daughters."

Tom looked astonished.

"My wife, I take it, is well enough by now to stand the journey."

Mr. Rousby went on with minute details of the defence, how two regiments from Pennsylvania had come and were camped on the field near by—he pointed to their white tents—and more were on the way, but I scarce heeded him. My eyes were fixed on the water between the Lazaretto Point and the fort. There would be the danger and there were Barney's men.

"I think," said I, "I will go look up the Flotilla men."

"I will see to Marshall's enlistment."

"I will be at the inn by nightfall!" I added hurriedly, and was off. One adventure I had going. Turning quickly to a loud hallooing from the left I saw Rob. He was driving a cart of earth, full tilt,

from the excavation to the embankment, and he was standing grandly, handling the rope reins with a lordly air.

I put my hands before my mouth in semblance of a horn and called, "Ta — loora — lo! ta — loora — lo!" At which he nearly fell over from laughter.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE busy excited days ran together in a blur of work and jest and sleep, and always work. The Flotilla men wrought with the others on the breastworks. By dawn we were gone, a day's provision in our pockets, which meant a cold snack to be eaten somewhere in the shelter of the fortifications. Now and then, as we came back to inn or home, we would see the women of the city loitering along the way, should the streets be those of fashion; and once, passing by Gadsby's I saw a group at the porch's corner, looking curiously down at the crowd. It was Mrs. Rousby and her daughters, but I was too grimed and hungered to join them, and, supper done, I was fit for naught but bed, and so the next day, and the next.

It was on a Sunday we had our first breathing spell. The Sabbath before had

been like any other day, but this day we rested. Our defences were complete.

I waked with a most luxurious feeling of holiday in the air. I watched the light filtering through the blinds, and heard the rustling of the maples outside, and yawned contentedly. When I raised my head cautiously, for fear of waking Tom, there was Rob wide awake likewise.

We slipped from bed, and with much whispering and tiptoeing made our toilettes. We had planned the night before, the three of us, that Tom should be left to late slumbers and to his own devices, while Rob and I should follow our own sweet will.

I had seen to it that my garments were duly furbished up, and when I saw Rob unlocking a drawer in the mahogany chest, and taking therefrom a suit more gorgeous than the one I recalled, I punched him to show my delight. So arrayed, we swaggered down to breakfast, and to chaffering with the crowds on the porch or street, and then we loitered off.

“Shall we go to meeting?” I asked.

“I had thought—”

“Think how delightful the quiet of it will be,” I said teasingly.

“Oh, well, come on.”

There were only a few in their places as we came in, and few more entered; many had gone to the country, up beyond the town, where there was a large society. But when we had taken our seats, and the stillness had settled over us, and I began to steal glances toward the women’s side, I saw the face I looked for. Rob saw it too, spite of the stiffness of his attitude; and when the meeting was done and we went out to the steps and the bit of green before the door, he waited eagerly to see if she would greet him.

Mr. Hopkins came up to me with some question of Marshall and our affairs, and as we stood there, the sun shining white on the street, the trees motionless with midday heat, the Friends about us talking cheerily, there came suddenly on the Sabbath’s stillness the boom of cannon, “boom! boom!” tearing the peaceful quiet asunder.

I sprang for Rob, standing near the women’s door. It was the signal, the fir-

ing of the cannon on the court-house green, the signal that the British had entered the Patapsco.

“Rob!” I cried, but he never heeded me.

“You will say good-bye?” he was begging the slender figure standing on the steps.

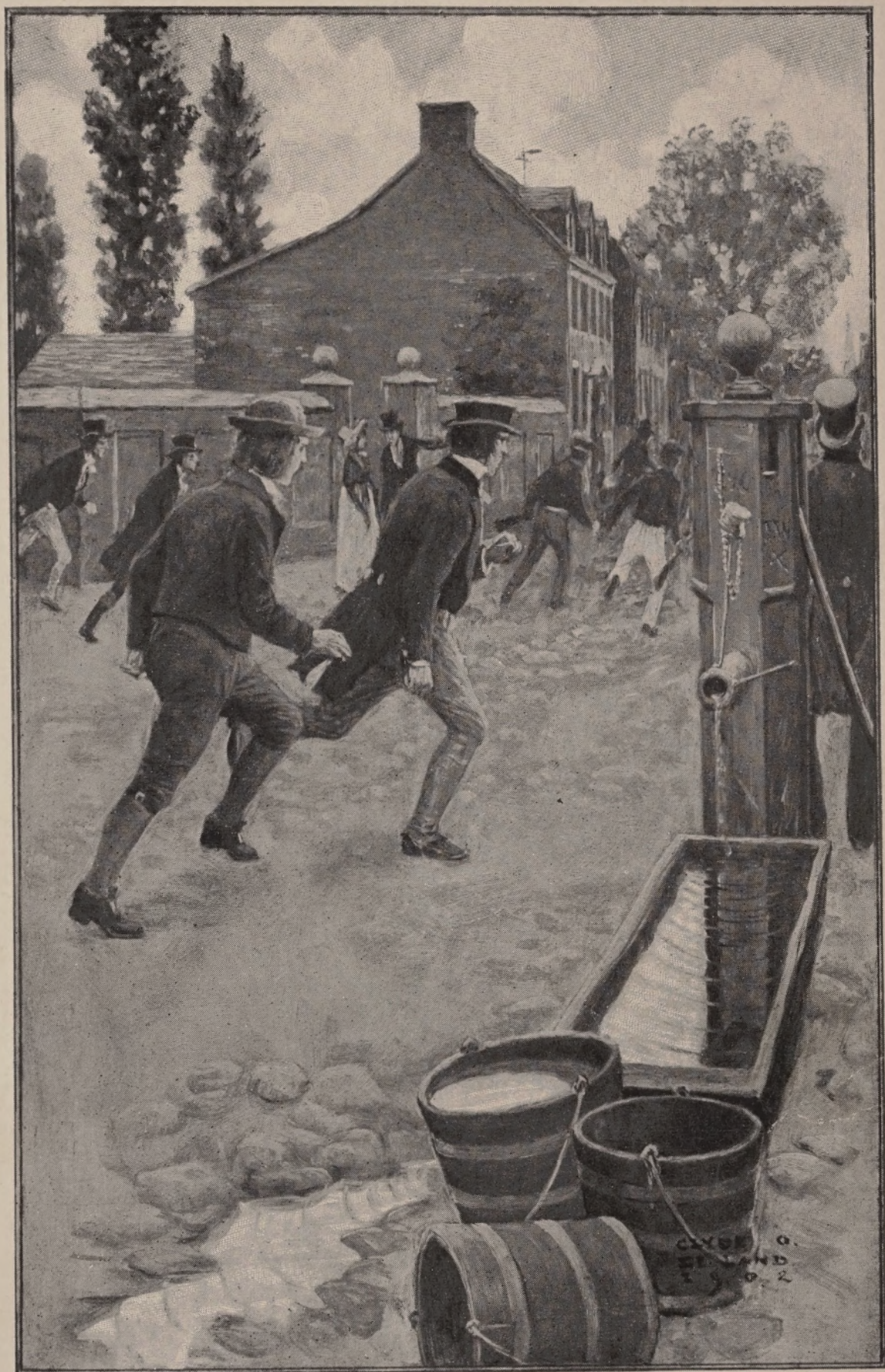
“You will say good-bye? I must go, Ruth.”

She gave him her hand. I could see it tremble as she gave it.

“We part friends?”

“God bless thee,” she whispered.

And then and there Rob caught her close and kissed her, and then we went racing up the street. As we ran the crowd grew; the people were pouring from the houses. Every man was a soldier and every man was making ready. At the inn we found Marshall; he was well-nigh ready. I remember now how we chafed Rob for not having time to change his finery. We hurried out. Down Market Street our way lay together. The women hung from their windows to see us pass, surging on without order yet, each man to his post. At Gadsby's I looked up and saw Mistress Bess, white as her frock, but smiling as she glimpsed us.



When our ways parted, we paused for a moment, the crowd pressing by us, and looked in each other's faces. None of us spoke, only a long look and they went their way, I mine.

That night we lay in our barges, passive ; next day we heard the guns of the battle of North Point, and prayed and swore alike for the moment of our own fight. But the day went to its close. The silvery splendors of the night shone down on harbor and fort and fortifications, and we waited each hour for attack ; it should have been the enemy's manœuvre to have opened fire upon Point Lazaretto, seize it, and open the way for the attack of their land forces on the fortifications, but there was not a gleam to brighten the night save the shine of heaven's lights.

Beyond midnight I was hurrying across the harbor in an open rowboat with a message, — that was my service, I had disclaimed all rank, knowing my ignorance, and had been detailed as aide, — my eyes searching far down in the darkness where we knew lay our foe, when I heard a soli-

tary report and saw the bursting of a rocket. I made all speed. The bombardment had begun! But it was not until sunrise that they got the range of us.

That day I learned what courage meant. It means to lie hour after hour with shells bursting overhead, bombs screaming past, the barges reeling with the force of the explosions, the air heavy with smoke that, like a pall, hangs over everything and veils disaster or victory, and holds the tale you strive to tear from its folds; to know that you are panting for a chance to fight back at them; to know that your guns are loaded, aimed; to know the range of your guns would carry but halfway to the enemy's decks, and then sullen, stubborn, bulldog-like, hold on and wait your chance — that is what we learned.

Once the enemy came close enough, and the guns from the fort and the Point and the barges hailed destruction upon them; how they fled back to safety!

Then again the rain of fire and the cloud of smoke, which hung more heavily about us in the humid atmosphere of the rain

which had begun, and was drifting even betwixt us and the fort, so that we began to look with straining eyes toward the flag flying there, and I watched for its folds between the mists.

Night settled down, the fire was fierce; we feared secret manœuvres. It was midnight when the lieutenant came to me. "There is some secret movement among the enemy; we have a message from the Point. By the glare of a rocket they swear they have seen a disembarking party."

"Fort Covington!" I cried. Could they steal up the river in the darkness of the night, and come upon them there and seize the guns and turn them against the fort and city, we should be in dire straits. "I must warn them."

He nodded, and I was off in my boat across the inner harbor.

So far the barges had not been struck. We had ceased to fear their fire. Now a shell exploding above me made me wonder if they had gotten a better range. A bomb came skipping along the water, and as I turned a second to watch its course there

was an awful roar all about me, a flashing of lights and singing of water, and I went down into the waves. I came up gasping, struck out feebly, and went down again. Then I knew with a sudden keen consciousness that it was a fight for life. I struck out more strongly and found an oar; floating against it, I rested, and tried to collect my dazed wits. I was hurt somewhere and bruised and stunned; one arm — it was my left, thank heavens! — hung limp and useless. And then I remembered the message I bore. I set my teeth, resolved the errand should be done. Pushing the oar before, and striking out with my right arm, I made slow headway, but when I was nigh exhausted I felt the firm earth underfoot. My legs at least were sound, and I started running for the fort. Thank God! I got there, for the men were wet, dispirited, grumbling; soon as they knew a possible danger they were alert, hearty, ready.

We waited with straining ears and eyes for I know not how many minutes, the thunder of the cannonading making hearing impossible; then there ran up at our very

side, it seemed, a rocket. How we thundered at them ! How the cannon of the fort and the City Battery roared ! Their fire back was close and hot, if from small guns. One of our men fell wounded, another dead. He was a gunner ; and seizing his ramrod from his stiffened hand, I stood to his work. It was near dawn when we knew we had driven them off. Then while our men were still cheering, I fell, faint with pain and exhaustion, crumpled up against the gun, and slept as men will in the pauses of agonizing pain.

When I awoke there was a loud deafening huzzaing and cheering about me. It was broad daylight, the mists drifted apart, and the flag floated above the fort, and there was no ship of the fleet in sight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I WAS so weak, bruised, sore, and faint that I could scarcely have gotten to my feet but for that infection of joy that was running like a riot from battery to fort, from fort to barge, from barge to Point and fortifications. Under its stimulus I begged that the officer in command should send word of me to my commander and give me leave to go city-ward.

He said some kind words of praise that fell on dulled ears, as I hurried away, stumbling at first, but walking easier as my limbs eased from their stiffness.

Never have I seen such sights as that morning in the town, but I hurried past them all, a very passion of uneasiness possessing me. I was safe and unharmed—I counted my wounds as such—but where was Rob, and where was Marshall? How had they fared in the battle on land?

I pushed my way straight through the throngs about the Golden Horse to the landlord. Was there any news of them? His jolly red face whitened at the question.

“Mr. Marshall is upstairs—” I never waited the finishing of his sentence, but worn as I was, bounded up the steps. The door was ajar. I glimpsed the bed, Tom’s white face on the pillow, and then I fear I did my one cowardly deed of the siege—I fainted.

When next I knew the outside world, my head, too, was pillowed. Over there was Tom; I could see him. The room was beautifully quiet and peaceful and dusky, and there was a smell of roses in the air. I turned slowly and painfully—what a twitch it gave me to move—and close by was Mistress Bess, pale, but looking very resolute and calm, no trace of shyness in her face. I called her name softly and she started, her face a very tremble of joy.

“Jack!” she whispered, bending over me, and I could see her gray eyes darkened with tears, and the wet drops on her lashes, and her tremulous lips.

“How is he?” I begged.

“Better, much better. He is very anxious about you.”

“Me!”

She shook her head at me. Then she said softly, “He is asleep.”

Then I asked, “Rob?”

She smiled as she answered what she knew I meant. “Not a scratch!”

I lay still and quiet, she still standing by me. So I was ill or had been; I scarce thought of it. “Was he wounded?” I whispered, pointing a shaking finger toward Tom.

She nodded her dark head. “But the ball has been extracted. He is doing well; but he has been anxious —”

“If he had been killed,” said I slowly, “I should have felt — I should have felt *I had killed him.*”

That had been the thought I could not stand, and it had swept the last straw of my strength away.

Poor Bess sank by my bedside to stifle the sob that would come.

“*I, too,*” she whispered.

Then when she was calmer, "It was Rob who rescued him ; he was in the first charge — oh ! I must not tell you now. He is much better, and now he will not be anxious. We have all been so worried."

That must have been about me, but I cared not a whit. I turned my head wearily on my pillow. The wind was rustling in the maples outside and some one on the street was whistling merrily. How strange and stirring the new strain was. What was it ? I lost the tune. I was asleep while I wondered.

Tom and I had a most wonderful convalescence, he from his wound, I from the fever into which I had been thrown. We were showered with attentions. Our room was a bower of roses. We would have been stuffed with dainties had we eaten all were sent us. Mrs. Rousby and her daughters, Mr. Rousby and Rob, were ceaseless in their care for us, but Mistress Bess was still chief nurse. There were other visitors likewise, Mr. Hopkins and men of the city, who had many good wishes to put into fine words for us.

It was when we were both able to hobble from bed to chair that Mr. Rousby came noisily in late one afternoon. Mrs. Rousby and Rob were with us, and Mistress Bess was standing by the open window, looking idly down into the street. "There is news from the Commodore!" he exclaimed before he was well across the threshold.

"What of him?" I demanded instantly.

Mr. Rousby's hands were full of papers, and I thought to gain our news from these and stretched out an impatient hand. But he made no recognition of my movement. "He is better!"

"Where?"

Mr. Rousby settled himself comfortably in the chair he had dragged close to his wife's side. "At his farm near Elkridge landing."

"Who told you?" I again demanded.

"The Captain. He will visit you shortly. He has but reached the city and is wild for fear his vessel has been sunken in the harbor's mouth, and he hastened to the wharf where he left her moored. I assured him she was safe, so I have heard, but he must see for himself."

Then seeing that his audience was reduced to a proper state for listening, he went on with the news with which he was overflowing.

“The British treated the Commodore most kindly when he fell into their hands on the field of Bladensburg.”

“More than they did for many others,” declared Rob hotly.

“We are speaking of Commodore Barney,” replied Mr. Rousby with stately dignity. “They treated him most kindly. Their surgeon dressed his wounds. They left him at a house where he would be well cared for — Monkton and the Captain with him. There his wife joined him, and soon as he was able, they moved him to his home, where he does well. They think him well-nigh cured.”

“Thank God!” I whispered, for the Commodore was my hero.

Though I was joyed then, I trust it may cast no gloom upon my story to add that not many years after, the wound received at Bladensburg caused our loved leader’s life, and that the ball, extracted after death,

is kept among the mementos of our history. But now I heard, thankful for the tale.

“Now,” said Mr. Rousby, smiling broadly, “here is ‘Niles’ Register,’ which has just been published. You will find it rare reading. Listen to this : —

“Day by day we learn the heroic deeds of our late defence. It has but now come to our ears that in the gallant charge in which the British general, Ross, was killed a former citizen of our town, who had hurried heroically to our aid in our hour of need, distinguished himself by his brave conduct. Mr. Marshall — ”

“Hush, will you !” Tom cried, for we had not dreamed the mention was of him, spite of Mr. Rousby’s manifest delight.

“Mr. Marshall, for it is of him we speak, by his heroic action — ”

“Hush, or I shall hobble out of the room.”

Tom rose to his feet with such a look of determination on his white face and started off so quickly, though he staggered when he had gone a step or two, that Mr. Rousby was startled.

“Bless my soul!” he cried, as he caught him and helped him back to his chair. “Bless my soul! Then maybe you’d like to hear what they say about Jack here.”

It was but a line, a mention of my feat at Fort Covington; but it did me good to hear the praise, and it won me many a friend in the days to come.

“And here, sir, is your song.” Mr. Rousby handed me a printed slip. “It has been hard enough to come by. Faith, Mr. Keys has made himself a name; his song is sung everywhere. ’T was writ, sir, first on an old envelope while he was imprisoned on the British ship, and while they were thundering at our fort. Gad! when the dawn broke and he saw our flag still flying above it — here, sir, read for yourself; doubtless you know the air they sing it to.”

He began to hum the tune I had heard on street and stair, everywhere, since I had thrown off the stupor of my fever; while I read the stirring lines to their end:

“The star-spangled banner, oh! long may it wave,
O’er the land of the free, and the home of the
brave.”

I put my hand before my eyes and sat very still when I was done, and Mistress Bess stole to my side with a movement of sympathy; but when I looked up at her and we each of us—as people will do in the great moments of life—read each other's heart, I knew why the tear-drops trembled on her lashes and she knew why my eyes were dim. It was of neither our country nor our city we were thinking then; it was of Tom. He was reinstated.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IT was that very afternoon that Mr. Hopkins came to our room. It was dusk, but the candles had not yet been lighted, and he came hurriedly and left Marshall a letter.

Tom pulled the tassel of the bell-cord near his chair when he was gone, and bade the servant place the candle-stand near him and light the candle there.

As for me, I was silent and strangely heartsick. The joy of the afternoon brought this as its rebound. The noise of the street outside jarred upon me, and I closed my eyes and thought longingly of the island and the singing winds and dashing waves.

“Jack!” Tom’s voice called me back from my dream of them. I opened my eyes to see the gleam of the candle shining on his fair face and a strange emotion showing there.

"This letter" — he held the crumpled sheets tightly in his hand — "is of your affairs. Will you read it?"

"Tell me!" I said instead.

"Your lawyer writes urging you to return at once if ever you intend doing so. Affairs on the plantation need the owner's attention, either that or sell the place. He has a good offer if you care to sell."

"How can I get there?" I asked petulantly.

"As for that the whole face of things has changed since Baltimore has beaten the enemy. The embargo will soon be raised. There will be wagons making the journey likewise. Men are encouraged to go about their affairs."

I was quiet, while my heart gave some long, heavy beats. To go on with my journey to Georgia, to leave Marshall and Rob and the friends I had made about our island; and then I saw in a flashing vision Susie's face, downcast, smiling, outlined against the screen of lilacs.

What should I find there? An empty, isolated house, slaves who had forgotten

me, neighbors whose remembrance I had outgrown, relatives distant by both miles and blood.

Here I had first lived my own life. I had been enabled to do some deeds which had won me praise; there were new friends for the making and old ones tugging at my heart-strings when I thought of putting six hundred miles between us. I straightened myself suddenly. "What do you think of doing?" I demanded of Tom.

He moved uneasily and shifted the candle on the table before he replied. "My affairs in the West have prospered better than I expected. I have some money. I am thinking of buying a plantation."

"Where?"

"Near Rousby Hall," he confessed.

"Do you think I had best go?" I questioned, pointing to the letter on the table.

"I scarcely know."

"If I should sell, and invest here."

Tom looked up eagerly. "In that case Mr. Hopkins, who has some inkling of the matter, bade me say he would stand your friend."

I was thinking intently and made no answer, so Tom went on. "He is the shrewdest young merchant in the town and will point you a sure way towards making your fortune. He is scarce half a score years older than you."

"Should I go into business here," I began, slowly putting my thoughts into words, "with his kind assistance and with Rob to attend to my teaming —"

"Gad! the very thing!"

"If I do, you'll sell me the island, Tom?"

"Zounds!"

"You'll sell me the island? You'll have your plantation. You'll have no need of it; I want it."

"Jack!" Marshall hobbled over to me and touched my hand. It was cool enough, if my cheek were feverish.

"You will sell it?" I insisted.

"You shall have it. Faith, don't work yourself into a fever."

So I had my way. The island was duly sold and bought. It was mine. The thought of it was like tonic in the blood. And then I fell to dreaming of its sandy stretches,

and to longing to feel the blowing of the strong salt wind on my cheek and listen to the waves curling along the shore and see the silvery gleam of the water and the autumn mists veiling the mainland — and to see likewise the face of a little neighbor there. I longed to be back there while I was yet weak ; while the lawyer was engaged in selling my place and Mr. Hopkins was busied in looking out for a warehouse for my business. I longed for it more and more.

There are times when all things seem to set the current of one's whims. The Rousbys were anxious to be starting homeward. Tom, too, was strong enough for the journey. The moving would do me little harm. In a few days we were gone. Mr. Rousby and his family took the landward way, but Tom and I sailed down the bay in the very vessel whose shipwreck cast us on the island, our old Captain at the helm.

We spent long, happy days there that fall, — days that were not all idle either. The Hall was rebuilding, the family living merrily meanwhile in one of the outbuildings. Tom was looking after the buying

and the stocking of his plantation, and strength was coming back to me, like the run of the tide on the flood.

The Wilsons were home again, their humble house had escaped. The fear of insurrection had passed away with the fear of invasion, and spite of its terrors, or rather because of them, the country side was never gayer.

Tom's wedding that late autumn set the ball rolling, and when at Christmas-tide I left for a new home and for serious work, it still rolled merrily.

But that was not the end of my island days. Many a bachelor holiday I spent there, and many another likewise. Susie was well-nigh as fond of it, when we ran from the city for a merry-making, as of her old home across the beautiful curving harbor.



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